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Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 September 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe .... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Address by Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Chinchilla Miranda (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure to begin this address with warm congratulations to Ambassador John Ashe on his recent election as President of the General Assembly. We wish him success in his endeavours and assure him of our support.

Today is the last time that I will address the General Assembly as President of Costa Rica. As on previous occasions, my message is based upon my firm conviction of the essential nature of the United Nations to promote peace, security, development, democracy and human rights. The United Nations brings together, catalyses and protects the multilateral system and the international rule of law. Its validity, vigour, legitimacy and effectiveness are essential to all countries, but most importantly to the smaller and more vulnerable ones, especially if, like Costa Rica, they do not have armed forces. In the course of humankind's most challenging times throughout the past 68 years, we have turned to the Organization to seek guidance and solutions responsive to the hopes and longings of our peoples. Today, we are facing one such occasion, amid contradictions. We are the authors of great achievements, but we are also overwhelmed by acute tragedies. There remain serious global challenges for which we have not crafted responses that are equally global in scope.

On 2 April, we conclusively ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, a vital step that was proudly led by our country as one of the seven sponsoring countries, and a great victory for humankind. I am pleased to announce today that it has been unanimously ratified by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, and I pledge our support to work assiduously for its implementation.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In two days, for the first time in the history of the Organization, we will hold a high-level debate on nuclear disarmament. Costa Rica will also lend its leadership on the issue. In that way, we hope to be able to move closer towards an ideal aspired to by most countries and to make progress in new conceptual frameworks for discussion. The meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, chaired

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with effectiveness by our Permanent Representative in Geneva, Mr. Manuel Dengo Benavides, have opened up a promising path.

We are working at a good rate to establish a new global agenda for sustainable development, as well as institutions to promote it. That is evidenced by the reform of the Economic and Social Council, the establishment of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the progress being made on the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Increasingly, innovation, technology, education and culture are recognized as promoters of development, and there is a growing awareness of the need to actively incorporate young people in such endeavours. Together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Costa Rica is honoured to have hosted and organized BYND 2015 Global Youth Summit, an international conference on youth, development and information and communication technologies. The conference brought together young people from various parts of the world and enjoyed the able leadership from the ITU Secretary General, Mr. Hamadoun Touré. Today, I symbolically present to the General Assembly the final declaration of the conference, adopted in our capital on 11 September by thousands of young people from every continent. We trust that it will be a very relevant input for the discussion of the post-2015 development agenda.

To explore options for the future, in March Costa Rica also hosted an international conference of middle-income countries jointly organized with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Its results will help to better conceptualize the needs of nations like ours and the contributions that we can make in terms of the post-2015 development agenda.

As part of those initiatives, we must not overlook our duty to strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the need to accelerate their implementation, particularly in less developed countries.

The achievements I have mentioned, as well as others, have taken place under the ominous and tragic shadow of a world that remains very complicated. We are still shocked by the brutal terrorist attack committed a few days ago in Nairobi. Today I express our deepest solidarity with the people of Kenya and our strongest condemnation of that attack, and of terrorism and fanaticism.

For the past two years, we have been struck by the tragedy in Syria. The incessant count of massacred and displaced persons has been as unsettling as the inaction of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act in a timely way to contain the crimes and the violence. After a period of paralysis and confusion, it seems that at last we are approaching a solution that will lead to breaking out of that unacceptable stalemate. We raise our voice to demand that the Security Council act decisively to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria, halt the violence, seek a negotiated and democratic way out of the conflict and hold accountable those responsible for the horrible crimes committed in that country.

Costa Rica insists that the Security Council should refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court. We also call again on the five permanent members of the Council to henceforth commit themselves to refraining from exercising the veto in cases of crimes against humanity.

The Syrian tragedy underscores the need to work decisively towards the organic application of the responsibility to protect and to promote the use of mediation to avoid the emergence or the worsening of conflicts. As a concrete measure towards such prevention, we urge all Member States to join the initiative of Australia, Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana and designate national focal points for the prevention of atrocities and on the responsibility to protect. The preventive approach is also necessary to manage universal public goods and, consequently, to exert global governance.

The prevention and reversal of global warming is one of the most urgent issues on our crucial agenda. We cannot remain inactive while global warming increases, ocean levels rise and the survival of several small island States is threatened. We commend the Secretary-General's plan to convene a summit on climate change and his promotion of the initiative entitled "The Oceans Compact: Healthy Oceans for Prosperity". We believe that the time has come to negotiate, pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Oceans, an international agreement on that subject.

Besides being an instrument for global governance and the protection of universal public goods, international law entails many other dimensions. Those include respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, goodwill in addressing border issues and observance of all the decisions of the International Court of Justice. Costa Rica is a firm believer in and scrupulous observer of international law in all its aspects. But that attitude contrasts with the absolute disrespect of the Government of Nicaragua of the most elementary norms of conduct and coexistence among States. That disrespect has led to open and unacceptable aggression against our country and to the flagrant disobedience of the orders of the Court at The Hague.

In October of 2010, Nicaraguan forces occupied part of Costa Rica's territory. Following our complaint, the International Court of Justice issued provisional measures that, among other things, prohibit the presence of Nicaraguan personnel in the zone under dispute. But Nicaragua has continued sending contingents of political activists, funded and organized by its Government. In August 2013, the Court reiterated its demand for compliance with the provisional measures, but Nicaragua has again ignored them. Their scorn demonstrates the urgent need to establish procedures that guarantee the respect of all decisions emanating from the Court, including precautionary measures. Costa Rica commits itself to work towards that goal and expects an open stance from the international community.

The Nicaraguan Government, moreover, has offered blocks of the patrimonial sea of Costa Rica for exploration and exploitation of oil. It seeks to extend the limits of its continental shelf by ignoring our rights and has broken off negotiations to secure maritime boundaries. It has threatened to claim a province of Costa Rica as its own and has restarted dredging works in the zone subject to the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, it is pursuing a policy of increased re-armament.

The Nicaraguan and Costa Rican people wish and deserve to live in peace, but the Nicaraguan Government insists on preventing that. By pursuing a course of such deliberate and repeated misconduct, the Government of Nicaragua undermines international law and the very purpose of the United Nations.

Notwithstanding the gravity of the situation, Costa Rica remains peacefully and firmly committed to the well-being and security of our population. We promote a model of development based upon harmony with nature, solidarity and social inclusion, an open economy and open trade, the development of our human resources, and innovation. We realize that development is futile if it is not founded on a profound respect for human dignity and the rights and well-being of the people.

We firmly believe that respect for and promotion of human rights in all its dimensions is a national and international duty. For that reason, among others, we remain open to all special procedures on human rights, and we are engaged actively and constructively in the Human Rights Council.

In facing the challenges of public safety, including drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, our country has adopted a balanced strategy whose positive results are evident in many areas, including the continued reduction in our homicide rate over the past three years, one of the lowest in Central America. Given the gravity for many nations of the challenges of drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, we join the call by other States from our region, such as Mexico and Guatemala, to re-evaluate agreed international policies and to seek more effective responses against drug trafficking, from a perspective of health, respect for human rights and impact reduction. Along the same lines, it is necessary to increase international cooperation to reduce the illegal flows of weapons and money that fuel criminal networks.

The new global strategy on that enormous challenge should be the product of the open and inclusive debate during the extraordinary session of the General Assembly in 2016. We salute the Antigua Declaration of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States as a first step to leading us in the right direction towards that special session.

Against the backdrop of the actions and convictions I have just outlined, we respond enthusiastically to the call of the President of the General Assembly to advance in framing the post-2015 development agenda during this session. We are encouraged by his emphasis on more active involvement by civil society in that process, the importance assigned to human rights and the rule of law as bases for development, and his openness to new ideas and institutional modalities, including alliances among multiple sectors.

Costa Rica looks to the future with confidence. At the same time, we are aware of the risks and challenges that we face as a country, as a region and as part of humankind. In that future, we see the United Nations as an indispensable institution, a steadfast companion, a visionary guide and co-guardian of our tranquility and well-being. I pay tribute to its contributions and sincerely hope that they may multiply in the years to come.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Federal President of the Republic of Austria.

Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fischer: I thank the President for raising for discussion at this year's general debate a very pertinent subject, namely, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". Shaping our planet's future after 2015 is indeed a crucial task ahead of us, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described very impressively in his presentation this morning (see A/68/PV.5). While we remain fully committed to the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the post-2015 agenda has started.

One idea that has caught my particular attention is to upgrade the eradication of hunger from an indictor to a goal in that new agenda. More still needs to be done, and everyone must contribute a fair share: States, international organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society alike. Let me assure the Assembly that Austria will contribute its share as well.

The international community currently faces major threats in its search for global security. The Middle East remains exposed to fundamental challenges. We welcome the agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation on a framework for the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal. We believe that the Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Accountability is, and remains, necessary to stopping the atrocities and prevent future crimes.

The path to democratic participation and a new beginning in Syria — the actual goal of the civilian protests that started two and a half years ago — remains crucial. Unfortunately, the parties seem to be firmly set on a military solution to the conflict. However, it should be clear that the best way to achieve a sustainable solution can only be a political, negotiated one. That is the Austrian position.

By now the civil war in Syria is greatly affecting all neighbouring countries. The conflict is a Syrian one, but the consequences go far beyond its borders. It has indeed become international.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to have been overshadowed by the upheavals in the region. I have followed events there for almost 40 years. I am convinced that what is needed for a solution is the willingness not only to negotiate in good faith but also to take into account the needs and sensibilities of the negotiating partner: the other side. I, for one, cannot believe that the value of the new settlements to Israel outweighs the damage they cause by being an obstacle to peace and reasonable conditions.

We welcome that the new United States Administration has devoted its full attention to that long-standing question and that direct negotiations resumed at the end of July. What we need now is decisive leadership. We are convinced that a breakthrough in the central conflict would also mean a decisive step towards stabilization of the entire region.

While we continue to support the ongoing transition processes in the Arab world, recent developments in the region have cast a shadow on the democratic gains achieved so far. Progress on the difficult path to democracy will greatly depend upon whether all parts of society are included.

Vienna and its United Nations headquarters serve as a platform for the discussion on sustainable development. Austria is very pleased that the Office of the Special Representative for the Sustainable Energy for All initiative in Vienna started its activities on 1 July. We welcome the initiative's cooperation with thematic and regional hubs, as well as with other specialized organizations like the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Austria is also the host country of the newly established International Anti-Corruption Academy. This international organization and centre of excellence has already undertaken several successful activities in fighting corruption — a major obstacle to reasonable development in all areas of society. I thank the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the second Assembly of Parties, scheduled to take place in December. Furthermore, I would like to invite all States that have not yet done so to become members of the Anti-Corruption Academy.

This year's Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations took place in Vienna in February, with the forward-looking theme of "Responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue". More than 1,500 participants from Government, civil society, the private sector and the media, as well as a youth forum of 150 outstanding and highly dedicated participants, provided most valuable input for the discussions of the Forum.

In that context, I am also pleased to report that the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue was inaugurated in Vienna on 26 November 2012. The Centre — a joint initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Spain and the Republic of Austria — serves as an interactive platform for religious leaders, experts and civil society alike.

Multilateral cooperation can deliver solutions to global problems. The historic accomplishment of the Arms Trade Treaty is an important example in that regard. We look forward to its earliest possible entry into force. At the same time, the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime is being challenged, day after day, by alarming developments. We were, and still are, deeply shocked by the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We observe North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons and missile capabilities with concern. And we have new hope that the Iranian nuclear issue will be resolved by negotiations, which, after the election of a new Iranian President, should be resumed shortly.

Similarly, the continued reliance on nuclear weapons and the limited progress towards nuclear disarmament are of great global concern. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts can be achieved only when they go forward together. Nuclear weapons should be stigmatized, banned and eliminated. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have to be put at the centre of our attention.

While some might believe that there is a contradiction between respect for cultural and religious differences on the one hand and the universality of human rights on the other, I am convinced that they reinforce each other. If people and nations can count on human rights being protected, they will show respect for the other side.

The Human Rights Council, with its universal periodic review mechanism and special procedures, has, within a few years, developed into an effective instrument to address human rights violations and crisis situations in many instances. Austria, as a current member of the Council, is contributing to those efforts with targeted initiatives for the safety of journalists, the protection of religious minorities and the promotion of the rights of the child.

We welcome the continuing trend towards the universal abolition of the death penalty, which is a longstanding interest of mine. However, too many countries still maintain a retentionist policy with regard to that cruel and inhuman form of punishment. Our diplomatic efforts therefore have to be reinforced.

We are worried by the increasing number of human rights violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 2005 World Summit firmly placed human rights at the centre of United Nations activities. Respect for human rights is an indispensable prerequisite for peace, security and development.

Last year, the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law provided an excellent opportunity for us to renew our commitment to the rule of law at the national and international levels. The Austrian Government is considering setting up an Austrian rule-of-law trust fund, designed to support international actors in strengthening the rule of law and to offer legal expertise and deploy legal experts free of charge to developing countries, at their request. International law and the rule of law are the foundations of the international system. Austria strongly believes that only an international system based on the rule of law can lead to lasting peace, security, economic development and social progress. Obviously, that is particularly true for the use of force, which should occur only in self-defence or when authorized by the Security Council.

In that spirit, let me confirm that Austria remains fully committed to an effective United Nations system.

In that connection, I especially want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts and his commitment to peace, the rule of law and human rights.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Federal President of the Republic of Austria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Cartes Jara (*spoke in Spanish*): As President of the Republic of Paraguay, I have the great honour to speak in this global forum to address issues that are relevant to my country and to today's world in general.

I extend a special greeting to the President of the Assembly, Ambassador John Ashe, as well as to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in appreciation of their work towards the noble goals that unite us. Through their efforts, they contribute to the legitimacy of the United Nations and help to ensure multilateral cooperation and the international validity of the rule of law.

It has been little more than a month since I took office as President of the Republic of Paraguay, after an exemplary electoral process that culminated on 21 April, when the Paraguayan people went to the polls to freely exercise their guaranteed constitutional right to elect their Government, with irrefutable results. Electoral observer missions from various regional and continental organizations, and from the United Nations itself, were present and certified the legality, legitimacy and transparency of the elections and the electoral process, whereby the will of the people honoured me with the highest office of our Republic. Those events also represent the conclusion of a long transition towards democracy in Paraguay. For the second, time in our history, executive authority was consecutively transferred from one political party to another with full respect for the constitutional framework. That is no small achievement in our 202 years of independence, and it signals the true beginning of a new historic and auspicious period for my country.

Republican institutionalism, the building of consensus, the strengthening of the democratic system, unconditional respect for human rights, and freedom of speech and of the press are the cornerstones of my Government, which aims to be an exemplar of patriotism, honesty, inclusion and effectiveness, with the capacity needed to propel Paraguay towards its destined greatness.

The people of Paraguay have been waiting for a great Government for a long time. I hope to be able to deliver on that great vision, which will position my country firmly on the global stage, where we want to stand out by ensuring that we are a land of opportunity for Paraguayans and foreigners alike. As has been said, Paraguay is one of the most closely guarded treasures of Latin America, and there are good reasons to hope that it will have a promising future.

I have made combating poverty a priority for my Government. It is incomprehensible that a nation so rich in resources should have so many poor. We will give no quarter in the fight to reduce our poverty indicators as much and as quickly as possible. Change is coming, and not through aid but by ensuring human dignity. Social investment is at the forefront of my Administration's agenda. That is the new direction we want to take in my country, with investment that is for the people, so that they may live in dignity and become the engine of our development, and, better still, so that the general welfare of the people can become the firm basis of our democracy.

My Government has also committed to a policy of zero tolerance for corruption and an end to impunity. We expect to face that challenge with the firm support of the judiciary and the Office of the Attorney General.

Paraguay's economy has enviable numbers. We are the only country in the region that has not altered its currency, the guaraní, since it was first introduced in 1943. Our macroeconomic indicators are more than encouraging. Paraguay is clearly suited to investment. Nature has endowed my country with an enviable climate, more than 90 rivers, abundant and fertile soil and clean, renewable energy generated by three hydroelectric power plants. One, Acaray, is entirely Paraguayan-owned, while Itaipu and Yacyretá are co-owned with Brazil and Argentina, respectively. The latter are among the largest hydroelectric plants in the world. We have one of the world's largest freshwater reserves, the Guaraní Aquifer, a great part of which lies beneath Paraguayan territory.

Apart from the advantages of nature and abundant, clean and renewable energy, the majority of Paraguay's population is young, with more than 75 per cent under the age of 30. Our tax system is favourable to investment and our economic growth clearly exceeds the average for the region. My Government is committed to ensuring legal security, with clear and transparent rules for safeguarding people and their property.

Today we are a country with a revitalized economy and a focus on efficiency, transparency and a reliable public administration. A few weeks ago I was present in our Congress at the signing of an agreement for Paraguay, whereby the political parties represented in the legislature, along with other social institutions, committed to working together on framework agreements and plans of action to strengthen governance and attain material and spiritual goals for the people's welfare. In that way, we are seeking to maintain the general good over that of the individual. We do that through dialogue, which is the main instrument of democracy. Together, we assume the responsibility of making Paraguay a country of opportunity for all.

After visiting countries in Europe and the Americas recently, I reflect on the great challenge posed by the perception of my country beyond its borders. I have seen with satisfaction the respect, admiration and interest that Paraguay and its enormous potential give rise to. Just as it is our responsibility as Paraguayans to build predictability and reliability, it is for the branches of the Government to provide the legal security necessary for Paraguay's overdue progress.

I would like to underline my Government's commitment to the defence and promotion of human rights, which in Paraguay are fully acknowledged in the Constitution. We assume that stance out of genuine conviction, while my country is also a respectful signatory of recognized international instruments in that field.

The demands of landlocked developing countries like Paraguay must be adequately addressed. Apart from that, my Government is committed to overcome the disadvantages posed by our inland status, making our geographic position an advantage in communications, logistics and infrastructure that connects the world's zones and regions through Paraguayan territory. In a manner similar to that in which an old border dispute between Paraguay and Brazil finally gave way to what today is Itaipu, transforming a problem into a majestic work of integration and development, we hope that our landlocked position in the heart of Latin America will serve as a development hub for Paraguay and its neighbours.

On the international level, I cannot avoid mentioning the upheavals that disturb our times. Economic crises, financial disasters, civil wars and the use of weapons of mass destruction cloud the horizons of great regions of the planet.

The events in Syria are a concern for all of us, and the United Nations must play a pre-eminent role in finding a definitive solution to the conflict affecting that country. In that regard, my country calls for supporting the implementation of the framework agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation.

My Government has observed with satisfaction that the Republic of China on Taiwan has achieved a greater presence in the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations, thanks to solid international support and a rapprochement between both parties on the Taiwan Strait. My Government will continue to encourage the positive interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in the international sphere.

The calm and determination of the nations and the organizations able to help in conflict resolution are more necessary than ever. Paraguay encourages peace, dialogue and development in harmony with the other countries and the world, promoting an integration that is respectful of the rule of law, the dignity of nations and the asymmetries. Integration is a phenomenon that in this global era cannot be halted. Paraguay understands and promotes integration in conditions of equality as a means for supranational insertion, but under fair conditions and looking towards a common future, not as a simple courting of Powers or being a silent guest in global forums that are discussing the future of our peoples.

Paraguay's contribution is essential in today's integrated reality and is indissolublely linked to our dignity as a free nation, sovereign and independent, under the premise of the right to the self-determination of peoples and the principles of non-intervention and the legal equality of States. The true destiny of the people of Paraguay is to become a prosperous nation, living in social peace, liberty, justice and equality. My management of the Government is geared towards creating and strengthening an environment suited to the unlimited opportunities that my country offers for all Paraguayans and for foreigners who have chosen it. I have realized that my people neither want nor seek handouts, but opportunities to achieve dignity through work and study. My country therefore today presents itself to the world as a land of opportunities for investment and prosperity, with security, formality, reliability and predictability.

On this occasion, I cannot fail to mention a key issue — education. Traditional political discourse has significantly undermined certain core ideas that my Government intends to definitively turn into a reality. Much has been said about the need for education, security and health, but little has been done in that regard. Improving education in Paraguay, in terms of quantity and quality, is a fundamental premise of my Government.

Today more than ever before, the great change that must take place in Paraguay and the opening of a wide window of opportunity depend on an efficient and inclusive educational system. Institutions of public education should rethink their role in society and assume an unprecedented role as a breeding ground for leaders for a new Paraguay, with a skilled workforce adapted to this millennium, in an interconnected world where those who possess more knowledge, information and abilities are more likely to find more and better opportunities for work, well-being and personal advancement. Those countries that emphasized education from the beginning are proud of their results. There is a clear and direct relationship between education and development.

Education is therefore key. The issue is rooted in the quality of training and is the key to escaping geopolitical shakles, backwardness and a lack of opportunities. For my country, the new rules that govern the world therefore represent an access to the ocean of development.

Speaking before the Assembly and the world for the first time as President of the Republic of Paraguay, I present the new direction that the Paraguayan people freely and sovereignly chose on 21 April. I belong to a nation whose children have contributed to history with their prowess and boundless sacrifice, such as the supreme sacrifice by our greatest hero, Francisco Solano López, Field Marshal and President of the Republic, who decided to give his life, sword in hand, fighting on the front lines with his last soldiers, rather than see his homeland humiliated. I have decided to devote myself to the service of Paraguay and to bring about the real change that my country demands, which is to return to the path of the true Paraguayan destiny of peace, development and modernity, and to grow in harmony with all nations of the world, particularly with our neighbours.

I assure the General Assembly that my country is a very generous and attractive place. I invite the world to learn more about Paraguay, to discover the treasure that pulses in the heart of America, ready to write anew the most glorious pages in its history, today in peace and social and economic development, with dignity and readiness to welcome all those who wish to share in our great destiny.

We Heads of State are transients in Government. History will judge us for what we have done for our peoples and will sternly hold us accountable for what we have failed to do. To honour the trust and hope of my people, I have decided to commit myself wholly to the service of my homeland and to do everything necessary for its greatness and prosperity.

Paraguay considers it necessary, more than ever before, to give greater impetus to the negotiating process between Israel and Palestine in order to attain a lasting peace, so that Israel and Palestine can live side by side with secure borders and in peace.

As a final comment, I wish to convey my most sincere condolences to the people of Kenya for the casualties that resulted from the terrorist attack, an act that we most vigorously condemn.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bērziņš: The three pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights — are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Respect for universal human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is a cornerstone of international peace and stability.

Fragile, conflict-affected and least developed countries face the biggest difficulties in ensuring sustainable development. Growing evidence shows that progress on the Millenium Development Goals in those States is impossible without first achieving peace and security. That leads us to one of the cornerstones of the new post-2015 vision: peace and security are basic conditions for a decent life and for the enjoyment of human rights.

The priorities of the Assembly's sixty-eighth session are topical and very pertinent. The new development framework for post-2015 will remain high on the United Nations agenda for the next two years and beyond. It should set out a comprehensive and coherent framework around a single set of global goals, driving action in all countries. A set of peacebuilding goals should be high on the post-2015 agenda, in which the United Nations should continue to play the leading role in promoting the settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

The Middle East stands at a crossroads. Events there have global impact, and the international community must take decisive actions.

We deplore the continuing humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. The easing of human suffering is the immediate goal, and we commend international efforts to that end. I would especially like to thank the neighbouring countries for hosting Syrian refugees. The detailed report by the United Nations inspectors confirms the use of chemical weapons against civilians on 21 August. Those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria must face the International Criminal Court. The agreement reached by the United States and Russia on the framework to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons should be reflected in a Security Council resolution with the clear indication that Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations would be invoked in case of non-compliance.

We encourage the new Iranian leadership to address the concerns of the international community. We welcome the stated determination of the new Iranian Government to resolve the nuclear issue, thus building confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

Latvia welcomes the reopening of direct Middle East peace negotiations. Latvia praises the role of the United States as the mediator. Negotiations should demonstrate the commitment of both parties to a peaceful settlement. We anticipate a two-State solution — Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Latvia is convinced that the resolution of protracted conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh should remain high on the international agenda. Efforts to resolve the conflicts should be increased.

Latvia accumulated extensive experience during its transition to a free, just and democratic society. As a European Union member State with that extensive experience, we share it with countries in the European Union's Eastern Partnership and Central Asia. Latvia will continue to offer its expertise in such areas as the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, thereby contributing to good governance and further economic development in those countries. However, it is essential to keep in mind that national ownership is fundamental in any reform process.

Latvia is stepping up development assistance for Afghanistan and the Central Asian States, particularly in the areas of transportation and customs. We see potential for the further integration of those countries into the global economy by developing international trade routes. The Northern Distribution Network already connects the region with Europe through Latvia. We are confident that it can also become a commercially viable long-term transit corridor after 2014.

We are approaching an important turning point in Afghanistan. In order to secure the progress achieved, the international community must remain committed to the country's long-term development. Latvia will continue to support civilian policing and to train military personnel. We will also provide financial aid to the Afghan National Security Forces as of 2015.

Sustainable development and prosperity go hand in hand. During times of recession, structural reforms and budgetary discipline, accompanied by economic stimulus, bring results. While we can observe signs of global economic recovery, there is no room for complacency.

To ensure robust economic growth, we need to ensure that the young generation contributes to it. Quality education is the key to empowering people; it should reach all. Everybody should have lifelong learning opportunities. Quality education is the foundation on which peaceful, prosperous and dignified societies are built.

Following the economic downturn in 2008, Latvia has been the fastest growing European Union economy for the past two years. We expect to maintain that strong growth trend at the level of at least 4 per cent annually for the coming years. Latvia is now ready for further integration into the global economy by introducing the euro in 2014 and by joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

An empowered civil society is a key engine of sustainable development. We are proud that the people of Latvia are actively engaged in the decision-making process at all stages. In the twenty-first century the public involvement's must be ensured both directly and on line. Latvia has been working actively to protect and promote Internet freedom as an important element of freedom of expression for an open and democratic society.

Latvia stands ready to contribute to the most fundamental goals that should figure on the post-2015 agenda, namely, promoting peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, we have put forward our candidacy for the elections to the Human Rights Council in 2014 and the Security Council in 2025. Latvia counts on the support of Member States and gives its assurance that it will contribute to the work of those bodies in a responsible manner.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia and to extend my warmest congratulations to the President and to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda on the occasion of his election as President of the Assembly at this session. I trust that he will bring his wealth of experience to bear on the work of the current session. In a similar vein, I congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić of the Republic of Serbia, for his leadership of the Assembly at the sixty-seventh session and for the initiatives he undertook during his tenure.

Let me also extend my special appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his inspiring leadership and his visionary initiatives that have mobilized the international community around many noble objectives. Those initiatives have engendered hope among the people around the world, especially the poor and marginalized.

We are deeply concerned about the growing number of acts of senseless violence around the world, as exemplified by the ghastly and cowardly murder of innocent persons in a terrorist attack on a shopping mall in Kenya. We commiserate with the families of all victims and with the Government and sisterly people of Kenya on such a terrible loss.

Because we know first-hand the profound destruction and long-lasting hurt inherent in civil conflict, we also agonize with the people of Syria, particularly those innocent women and children who suffer most from such tragedy. We unequivocally condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria and anywhere else in the world, and we call for concerted and renewed international effort to stem the rising scourge of terrorism and other transnational crimes through action to control and eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the communications revolution that has provided a broad cyber platform for the exchange of information. However, that should not provide a vehicle for the promotion of terrorism and the spread of unfounded and irresponsible information through unregulated cyber weaponry that threatens the security of nations, particularly fragile States, and open societies of freedom and democracy.

Colleague after colleague who will address the Assembly will no doubt express pride at the tremendous progress in Africa. Our continental growth has averaged over 5 percent annually, surpassing that of other regions. Moreover, our economies are diversifying, our trade infrastructure is expanding, our democracies are strong and maturing, and our regional institutions strengthening and leading the processes of cooperation and integration. But the new Africa story is not just about growth. We see improvement in school enrolment, health indicators, in trade and investment. The share of people living in poverty is declining. Democracy, while still needing room for improvement, has become the norm rather than the exception, and governance has improved significantly over the past decade.

We are equally pleased with the progress made in resolving conflicts in several of our countries, as we welcome the international support that has set Somalia on a trajectory of peace and development.

We appreciate the strong collaboration among regional economic communities, the African Union and the United Nations, joined by the international community, that responded robustly in the Malian crisis, thereby averting the threat posed to the peace and security of the entire region. The recent inauguration of a new, democratically elected President in Mali is a clear indication that such cooperation is the surest path to world peace. We congratulate the newly elected President of Mali, Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, for receiving the overwhelming endorsement of the Malian people, and we commend all stakeholders for respecting the outcome of the democratic process. We also salute the former interim President, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré, and all partners for working to restore constitutional order within the stipulated time period.

Although Liberia still faces the residual challenges of its own conflict, and despite our size and limited military strength, I am pleased to report that a small contingent of Liberian troops is currently participating in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. We view our role in that peacekeeping effort as a way of reciprocating, albeit in a small way, the countless demonstrations of friendship and goodwill that were accorded to us by Mali and other members of the international community during our dark days of war.

Once the epicentre of a regional war, I am pleased to note that the neighboring countries of the Mano River Union — Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia — are at peace and engaged in consolidating the gains of stability to accelerate national transformation through regional integration. A new Mano River Union initiative will facilitate connectivity in our power and transport systems, thereby enhancing cross-border trade, in which our market women are actively engaged.

I bring greetings from the Government and people of Liberia, who are this year celebrating 10 consecutive years of peace and progress. In those 10 years, our nation's pride has been restored and we have returned to the community of nations as a respectable and responsible partner. With the support of the international community, especially the United Nations through its peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts, we have rebuilt a new ethnically balanced professional army and increased the size and enhanced the professionalism of our police, immigration and intelligence forces, in line with our commitment to bear full responsibility for security with in our borders as United Nations peacekeepers execute a phased drawdown.

In that regard, we commend the Security Council for its recent adoption of resolution 2116 (2013), which extends the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Liberia to 30 September 2014. We fully commit to meeting all the expectations of the resolution, including continuing to take concrete steps aimed at developing and sustaining a self-sufficient and competent security sector able to tackle violent crimes, sexual and gender-based violence and the infringement of the rights of the ordinary person.

Thanks to our commitment and the resilience of the Liberian people, we have instituted a host of reforms intended to improve governance, enhance accountability and create an enabling environment for the exercise of basic freedoms, including freedom of speech and the press. That has put the country on a path of irreversible progress, which has enabled us to conduct two democratic presidential and general elections and adjust our Vision 2030, while laying a firm foundation for the transformation of our economy towards moving our country to middle-income status by the year 2030.

Liberia has come a long way, but we know that we have an even longer way to go. We have done much in restoring basic services and infrastructure, but still have much to do, especially in reducing our huge infrastructure deficits in power and in transport. We have done much in improving governance and strengthening our institutions of integrity, but still have much more to do in consolidating the culture of integrity and accountability in a society that is still beset by values occasioned by years of conflict. We have adopted laws and policies that eschew discrimination of any kind, to ensure social equity and equal opportunity, but still must do more in promoting natural reconciliation and healing. We have done much in achieving an average annual growth of over 7 per cent and attracted huge multi-million-dollar direct foreign investments, especially in our natural resource sector, but still have much more to do in expanding growth and diversifying our economy, making it more resilient to internal and external shocks and more responsive to the ever-increasing demand of our people for jobs and improved livelihoods. We still have much to do in continuing the reforms that will ensure equitable benefits from natural resource capital to current and future generations.

All the policies and actions that we have pursued in the past several years have enabled us to stabilize our overall national condition. We must now, over the next few years, take the hard decisions in addressing long-standing structural systems. We know that the transition from stabilization to transformation can be a long and hard road subject to brickbats from vested interests. We are bound to face criticism as we attempt to apply and respect the rule of law and as we challenge entrenched social habits, but we must change old mindsets and attitudes. We remain strong in that resolve, for it is the right thing to do.

I was honoured to have been selected by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as one of three co-Chairs of a 27-member High-level Panel of Eminent Persons tasked with making recommendations for a new global development agenda post-2015. The mandate of the Panel was to advise the Secretary-General on a bold and practical development agenda beyond 2015 that builds upon, as well as goes beyond, the Millennium Development Goals in establishing new goals that are ambitious and yet achievable. Last May, the Panel submitted its report to the Secretary-General for his consideration. We are pleased that many of the principles we identified are emphasized in the Secretary General's report (A/68/202), rightly titled "A life of dignity for all".

Today more than at any other time, we have an opportunity to transform our world; to pursue an agenda that will eradicate poverty while at the same time sustaining nature to secure natural resources for future generations. The solutions of yesterday may not apply today's challenges, so we must muster the courage to take bold steps. I therefore call upon the Assembly to reflect on the emerging challenges we face, to boldly seize new opportunities and to commit ourselves to a new global partnership that promotes economic and social transformations for inclusive and shared prosperity for all.

In Africa we are working towards a continental consensus that will convey an African position on the post-2015 development agenda. I am pleased to have been asked by the African Union Summit to chair a high-level committee of 10 Heads of State that will oversee and guide the process. We held our first meeting yesterday here in New York, and agreed upon a road map that will ensure a global development framework that is not only brave and ambitious, but one that reflects African priorities, a global agenda that creates an enabling environment for Africa's transformation that includes infrastructure development, increased productive capacities, resilience to external shocks and enhanced statistical capacities that will result will accelerate the reation of employment that is directed particularly to our youthful populations.

I am pleased to report that on 2 September, I chaired and launched the High-level Panel on Fragile

States, under the aegis of the African Development Bank. Of the estimated 7 billion people in the world, 1.5 billion live in situations of conflict and fragility. That data puts fragile States at the centre of the new post-2015 agenda. We hold the view that international partners should accommodate the peculiarities and special circumstances of post-conflict nations. The achievement of sustained economic growth and development in those countries is critical to reducing their vulnerability to new political and economic shocks, fuelled in many cases by high expectation gaps that need to be mitigated. We therefore call on all our partners to renew their support to the New Deal for Engagement on Fragile States, which calls for stronger ownership, harmonization, results and mutual accountability.

The President returned to the Chair.

I would like to conclude by expressing our gratitude to the United Nations family for sustaining our agenda of peacebuilding and sustainable development. Since its founding, the United Nations has had its share of challenges, but it remains the beacon of hope for the peoples of the world who thirst for peace; a world that is fair, a world that is prosperous, a world in which the uncommon dreams of all will have a fair chance of realization; a world where the weak can become strong; a world where no nation feels developed and powerful until all nations have their share of global wealth. The leaders of today must rise to those challenges. The future begins today. We must commit to a new global development trajectory that gives all of humankind a world of peace, dignity and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rouhani (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delgation*): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to offer my most sincere felicitations on your deserved election as President of the General Assembly and to seize the moment to express appreciation for the valuable efforts of the Secretary-General.

Our world today is replete with fear and hope — fear of war and hostile regional and global relations; fear of deadly confrontation between religious, ethnic and national identities; fear of the institutionalization of violence and extremism; fear of poverty and destructive discrimination; fear of decay and the destruction of life-sustaining resources; fear of the disregard for human dignity and rights; and fear of the neglect of morality. Alongside those fears, however, there are new hopes — the hope of the universal acceptance of "yes to peace and no to war" by the people and the elite all across the globe; and the hope that dialogue will be preferred over conflict and moderation over extremism.

The recent election in Iran represents a clear, living example of the wise choice for hope, rationality and moderation by the great people of Iran. The realization of democracy consistent with religion and the peaceful transfer of executive power showed that Iran is an anchor of stability in an ocean of regional instabilities. The firm belief of our people and Government in enduring peace, stability, tranquillity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the reliance on the ballot box as the basis of power, public acceptance and legitimacy has indeed played a key role in creating such a safe environment.

The current critical period of transition in international relations is replete with dangers, albeit also with unique opportunities. Any miscalculation of one's own position, and of course those of others, will cause damage on a historic scale; a mistake by one actor will have a negative impact on all others. Vulnerability is now a global and indivisible phenomenon.

At this sensitive juncture in the history of global relations, the age of zero-sum games is over, even though a few actors still tend to rely on archaic and deeply ineffective ways and means of preserving their old superiority and domination. Militarism and the recourse to violent and military means for the purposes of subjugating others have shown themselves to be failed examples of the perpetuation of old ways in new circumstances.

Coercive economic and military policies and practices geared to the maintenance and preservation of old superiorities and domination have been pursued in a conceptual mindset that negates peace, security, human dignity and exalted human ideals. Ignoring differences between societies and globally imposing Western values as universal values represent further manifestations of that conceptual mindset. Yet another reflection of the same cognitive model is the persistence of the Cold War mentality and the bipolar division of the world into the "superior us" and the "inferior other". Fanning fear and phobia around the emergence of new actors on the world scene is still another.

In such an environment, governmental and non-governmental, religious, ethnic and even racial violence has increased, and there is no guarantee that the era of quiet among major Powers will remain inviolate under the pressure of such violent discourse, practices and actions. The catastrophic impact of violent and extremist narratives should not — in fact, must not — be underestimated.

In that context, the strategic violence that is manifested in efforts to deprive regional players of their natural domain of action, containment policies, regime change from the outside and efforts to redraw political borders and frontiers, is extremely dangerous and provocative. The prevalent international political discourse depicts a civilized centre surrounded by uncivilized peripheries. In that scenario, the relation between the centre of world power and the peripheries is hegemonic.

The discourse that assigns centre stage to the North while relegating the South to the periphery has led to the establishment of a monologue in international relations. The creation of illusory identity distinctions and the current prevalent violent forms of xenophobia are the inevitable outcome of such discourse. Propagandistic and unfounded faith-phobic, Islamophobic, Shiaphobic and Iranophobic discourse indeed represents a serious threat to world peace and human security. That propagandistic discourse has assumed dangerous proportions through the portrayal and inculcation of presumed imaginary threats. One such imaginary threat is the so-called Iranian threat, which has been employed as an excuse to justify a long catalogue of crimes and catastrophic practices over the past three decades. The arming of the Saddam Hussein regime with chemical weapons and support for the Taliban and Al-Qaida are just two examples of such catastrophes. Let me say in all sincerity before this world Assembly that, based on irrefutable evidence, those who harp on the so-called threat of Iran are either a threat against international peace and security themselves or promote such a threat. Iran poses absolutely no threat to the world or to the region. In fact, in its ideals as well as in actual practice, my country has been a harbinger of just peace and comprehensive security.

Nowhere in the world has violence been so deadly and destructive as in North Africa and West Asia. Military intervention in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein's imposed war against Iran, the occupation of Kuwait, military interventions against Iraq, the brutal repression of the Palestinian people, the assassination of ordinary people and political figures in Iran and terrorist bombings in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon are examples of the acts of violence committed in that region in the past three decades.

What has been and continues to be practiced against the innocent people of Palestine is nothing less than structural violence. Palestine is under occupation; the basic rights of the Palestinians are being tragically violated, and they are deprived of the right of return and access to their homes, birthplace and homeland. Apartheid as a concept can hardly describe the crimes and the institutionalized aggression committed against the innocent Palestinian people.

The human tragedy in Syria represents a painful example of the catastrophic spread of violence and extremism in our region. From the very outset of the crisis, when certain regional and international actors helped to militarize the situation through the infusion of arms and intelligence into the country and active support for extremist groups, we emphasized that there was no military solution to the Syrian crisis. The pursuit of expansionist strategies and objectives and attempts to change the regional balance through proxies cannot be camouflaged behind humanitarian rhetoric.

The common objective of the international community should be a quick end to the killing of the innocent. While condemning any use of chemical weapons, we welcome Syria's acceptance of the Chemical Weapons Convention and believe that access by extremist terrorist groups to such weapons poses the greatest possible danger to the region and must be considered in any disarmament plan. Simultaneously, I would underline that any illegitimate and ineffective threat of use, or the actual use of, force will only lead to the further exacerbation of violence and crisis in the region.

Terrorism and the killing of innocent persons represent the ultimate inhumanity of extremism and violence. Terrorism is a violent scourge and knows no national borders. But violence and extreme actions, such as the use of drones, against innocent people in the name of combating terrorism should also be condemned. Here I should also like to say a word about the criminal assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists. For what crimes were they assassinated? The United Nations and its Security Council should answer this question — have the perpetrators been condemned?

Unjust sanctions, as a manifestation of structural violence, are intrinsically inhumane and against peace. Contrary to the claims of those who pursue and impose them, it is not the States and the political elite that are targeted; rather, it is the common people who are victimized by such sanctions. Let us not forget the millions of Iraqis who, as a result of sanctions cloaked in international legal jargon, suffered and lost their lives, and the many more who continue to suffer throughout their lives. Those sanctions are violent, pure and simple, whether called smart or otherwise, unilateral or multilateral. They violate inalienable human rights, inter alia, the right to peace, the right to development, the right to access to health and education, and, above all, the right to life. Sanctions, beyond any and all rhetoric, cause belligerence, warmongering and human suffering. It should be borne in mind, however, that their negative impact is not limited merely to their intended victims; it also affects the economy and livelihood of other countries and societies, including the countries imposing sanctions.

Today violence and extremism have gone beyond the physical realm and, unfortunately, have afflicted and tarnished the mental and spiritual dimensions of life in human societies. Violence and extremism leave no space for understanding and moderation as the necessary foundations of the collective life of human beings and modern society. Intolerance is the predicament of our time. We need to promote and reinforce tolerance in the light of the religious teachings and appropriate cultural and political approaches. Human society should be elevated from a state of mere tolerance to one of collective collaboration. We should not just tolerate others. We should rise above mere tolerance and dare to work together.

People the world over are tired of war, violence and extremism. They are hoping for a change in the status quo. This is a unique opportunity for us all. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that all challenges can be managed successfully through a smart, judicious blend of hope and moderation. Warmongers are bent on extinguishing all hope. But hope for change for the better is an innate, religious, widespread and universal concept.

Hope is founded on the belief in the universal will of the people across the globe to combat violence and extremism, to cherish change, to oppose imposed structures, to value choice and to act in accordance with human responsibility. Hope is without a doubt one of the greatest gifts bestowed upon human beings by their all-loving Creator. And moderation means to think and move in a wise, judicious manner, conscious of time and space, and to align exalted ideals with a choice of effective strategies and policies, while remaining cognizant of objective realities.

The Iranian people, in a judiciously sober choice in the recent elections, voted for the discourse of hope, foresight and prudent moderation, both at home and abroad. In foreign policy, the combination of those elements means that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a regional power, will act responsibly with regard to regional and international security and is willing and prepared to cooperate in these fields, bilaterally as well as multilaterally, with other responsible actors. We defend peace based on democracy and the ballot box everywhere, including in Syria, Bahrain and other countries of the region, and believe that there are no violent solutions to world crises. The bitter and ugly realities of human society can be overcome only through recourse to and reliance on human wisdom, interaction and moderation. Peace, democracy and the legitimate rights of all countries in the world, including in the Middle East, cannot and will not be secured through militarism.

Iran seeks to resolve problems, not to create them. There is no issue or dossier that cannot be resolved through reliance on hope, prudent moderation, mutual respect and the rejection of violence and extremism. Iran's nuclear dossier is a case in point. As clearly stated by the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, acceptance of Iran's inalienable rights constitutes the best and easiest way of resolving this issue. This is not political rhetoric. Rather, it is based on a profound recognition of the state of technology in Iran, the global political environment, the end of the era of zero-sum games and the imperative of seeking common objectives and interests in order to reach common understanding and shared security. Put otherwise, Iran and other actors should pursue two common objectives as two mutually inseparable parts of a political solution for Iran's nuclear dossier.

First, Iran's nuclear programme — and for that matter, that of all other countries — must pursue exclusively peaceful purposes. I declare here, openly and unambiguously, that, notwithstanding others' positions, this has been and always will be the objective of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction have no place in Iran's security and defence doctrine, and contradict our fundamental religious and ethical convictions. Our national interests make it imperative that we remove any and all reasonable concerns about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

The second objective — acceptance of and respect for the implementation of the right to enrichment inside Iran and the enjoyment of other related nuclear rights — provides the only path towards achieving the first objective. Nuclear knowledge in Iran has now been domesticated and nuclear technology, including enrichment, has already reached an industrial scale. It is therefore an illusion and extremely unrealistic to presume that the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme could be ensured by impeding the programme via illegitimate pressures.

In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran, insisting on enjoying its rights and the imperative of international respect and cooperation in this exercise, is prepared to engage immediately in time-bound and results-oriented talks to build mutual confidence and ensure the removal of mutual uncertainties with full transparency.

Iran seeks constructive engagement with other countries based on mutual respect and common interests and, within the same framework, does not seek to increase tensions with the United States. I listened carefully to the statement made by President Obama today in the General Assembly. With efforts commensurate with the political will of the leadership in the United States, and hoping that they will refrain from following the short-sighted interests of warmongering pressure groups, we can arrive at a framework to manage our differences. To this end, equal footing, mutual respect and the recognized principles of international law should govern our interactions. Of course, we expect to hear a consistent message from Washington, D. C.

In recent years, a dominant message has been heard reiterating again and again that the military option is on the table. Against the backdrop of this illegal and ineffective assertion, let me say loud and clear that peace is within reach. So, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I propose, as a first step, the consideration by the United Nations of a project to be known as "A World Against Violence and Extremism". Let us all ride this wave. I invite all States, international organizations and civil institutions to undertake a new effort to guide the world in this direction. We should start thinking about a coalition for enduring peace across the entire globe instead of ineffective coalitions for war in various parts of the world.

Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran urges the Assembly and the entire world community to take a step forward by accepting our invitation to join A World Against Violence and Extremism. We should accept and be able to open up new horizons in which peace will prevail over war, tolerance over violence, progress over bloodshed, justice over discrimination, prosperity over poverty and freedom over despotism. As beautifully stated by Ferdowsi, the renowned Iranian epic poet:

> "Be relentless in striving for the cause of good;
> Bring the spring, you must;
> Banish the winter, you should."

Notwithstanding all the difficulties and challenges before us, I am deeply optimistic about the future. I have no doubt that the future will be bright, with the entire world solidly rejecting violence and extremism. Prudent moderation will ensure a bright future for the world. My hope, aside from personal and national experience, emanates from the belief shared by all divine religions that a good and bright future awaits the world. As stated in the Holy Koran:

> "And certainly We wrote in the Book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it." (*The Holy Koran, XXI:105*)

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of Gabon at the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly. I warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President and I assure you of Gabon's full support. I also pay tribute to the remarkable work of your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I wish to reiterate our confidence in the cross-cutting work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as the important organizational reforms undertaken.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Boubacar Keita of the Republic of Mali and His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran on their elections in their respective countries.

This session has opened in a context marked by the terrorist attack against a shopping centre in Nairobi that killed many innocent people, including children. It was an intolerable act and I express, here in the Hall, my country's strongest condemnation of the perpetrators. I also express my own and my country's deepest condolences to the victims' families and the people of Kenya. Gabon offers its support to the Government of Kenya at this trying time. As a target of terrorism, Africa should receive the international community's full support and solidarity in its fight against the threat.

Poverty fuels extremism throughout the world, and the fight against that scourge must remain at the heart of our policies. Our peoples, especially the youth, demand greater socioeconomic progress from us. I therefore welcome the opportunity at this session to set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda and consider the necessary action remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs have provided a global solidarity pact for our countries' socioeconomic development. I would like to emphasize here that Gabon has achieved noteworthy progress in poverty reduction, food security and education. We have significantly reduced infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS prevalence and malaria mortality. We have strengthened women's participation in the political and economic life of the country. Despite the efforts made by States, it must be recognized that some of the MDGs will not be achieved as expected, owing mainly to unfulfilled commitments and reduced funding.

In that context, Gabon draws two main conclusions: the importance of strengthened governance and the need for further efforts in education and health aimed at more equitable and inclusive growth. As members begin to consider the post-2015 development agenda, I wish to note that Gabon seeks a post-2015 development agenda with a particular focus on Africa's priorities; it would include the unrealized MDGs among the future sustainable development goals and would take into account specific issues such as energy, access to clean water and sustainable agriculture. My country also seeks an agenda based on predictable funding that combines public and private funding, innovative financing and global partnerships. That agenda should stimulate direct investment and increase our share of international trade. It must promote the transformation of our economies with a view to inclusive and sustainable growth.

Such an approach has led me, as the Chairman of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, to propose to my peers — who have accepted — the creation of a fund of $200 million for the training and employment of young people, entitled "Train My Generation". Its goal is to enhance the role of youth in our countries' development efforts. In that spirit, at the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, I proposed to my peers that by 2020 Africa should be able to convert its raw materials prior to exportation. Using that approach, Gabon is already processing 40 per cent of its timber locally, thereby doubling employment in that sector.

In the context of the post-2015 development agenda, improved assessment and monitoring of countries' progress will become important. To that end, Gabon has proposed a sustainable development index that will combine the human development index and countries' ecological footprints.

Our quest for sustainable development must also ensure a binding climate treaty. Our best global experts tirelessly draw attention to global warming. The very existence of some States is threatened. It is necessary to state that we remain prisoners of our own interests and climate sceptics. For its part, Gabon has assumed its responsibilities by implementing measures such as our land-use programme and our environmental programme. Can we advance towards a post-Kyoto agreement in 2015 through strong and courageous steps in the interest of future generations? That question should cause greater concern. That is why I fully support the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a summit on climate change in 2014.

In addition to climate, biodiversity is threatened by poaching and the illicit trade in protected species. Elephants and rhinoceros are especially threatened owing to the illegal trade in ivory and horns. That phenomenon has become both an ecologic and an economic challenge; it is a transnational crime that threatens States' security. Along with the Federal Republic of Germany and other States, we have initiated a debate on that issue. On 26 September, here at the United Nations, an event will take place on the sidelines to mobilize support on the issue. We would be honoured by the presence and participation of members of the Assembly in the discussions. I also call on the United Nations to integrate that issue into its cooperation efforts with the African Union. In May in Marrakech, Morocco, in the presence of the African Development Bank, I proposed the creation of a trust fund aimed at strengthening capacity-building in Africa and other efforts.

Clearly, sustainable development must be based on good governance, equality, access to justice and the protection of human rights and democracy. In Gabon we are striving, with all national stakeholders, to strengthen those areas. We are collecting biometrical data in order to enhance election transparency, thus strengthening democracy. Furthermore, our election to the current Human Rights Council is in line with our commitments, particularly in terms of promoting and protecting the rights of women and children. During this twentieth anniversary year of the Vienna Declaration, Gabon will promote economic, social and cultural rights and seek to combat racism, hatred and violence throughout the world. It is on the basis of those commitments that Gabon will present itself as a candidate for the presidency of the Human Rights Council in 2014.

Africa is more hopeful for its future, but if that hope is to be realized throughout the continent Africa must be able to resolve crises preventing its development. Allow me to list some crisis situations.

First of all, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon is still concerned by fighting in the eastern part of the country, where women and children are paying a high price. We welcome the increased efforts on the part of the United Nations to implement Security Council resolution 2098 (2013) and the commitments made by the parties to the Framework Agreement signed in Addis Ababa. All countries in the Great Lakes region must support efforts by the United Nations. We would also encourage the efforts on the part of the Government to ensure that elections are held soon.

Gabon supports the transition in the Central African Republic, for which we have worked with members of the Economic Community of Central African States. We hope that the numerous stakeholders will adhere strictly to the transition framework. Nevertheless, we are still concerned by the humanitarian and security situation in the country, as well as by the renewed activities on the part of the Lord's Resistence Army. We welcome the establishment of the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic by the African Union, which will take over from the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic. Gabon calls for a contingency plan to be put in place for the new mission. I would like to thank France, which is supporting efforts on the part of the subregion to ensure that peace returns to the Central African Republic.

In Mali, at the height of the crisis, Gabon responded to a funding appeal by the African Union, which was launched to support its efforts in that country. We commend the positive political change that has taken place in Mali, proof of which can be seen in the presidential elections and the decision by the people of

Mali to elect President Keita. I would like to wish him all the best, and I call upon the international community to support the reconstruction of Mali.

With regard to Western Sahara, Gabon welcomes efforts to bring about dialogue and negotiations by the Organization. My country would also like to reiterate that it supports the Moroccan initiative for Western Sahara, which we believe is a courageous and realistic proposal, one that could lead to a lasting settlement. We call upon the different players to reach a constructive and dynamic compromise, the results of which will benefit the unity of Africa.

Africa should be able to respond to new threats to peace and security, including transnational crime, the illicit trafficking in small arms, and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which the Atlantic coast is now experiencing. Following the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, which was held in June in Yaounde, we adopted a strategy for combating those threats. Gabon is ready to make contributions towards the measures that were adopted at the Summit. I also welcome efforts by the Security Council to address the problem, particularly through resolution 2018 (2011).

Africa cannot face up to the challenges of peace and security alone. Its efforts must be given better support, because instability in Africa will have repurcussions in other regions. I thank our partners, particularly France, Japan, Germany, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union, for their significant contributions towards such efforts.

In the face of those new threats, it is important for the United Nations to continue to enhance its cooperation with regional African organizations. Furthermore, we must ensure the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, which was the first legally binding instrument on the matter adopted by the General Assembly, in May.

In a world stricken by tensions and crises, we must continue to work towards ensuring that the Organization can better fulfil its mandate in the area of international peace and security, with a particular emphasis on conflict prevention, while supporting peaceful resolutions to emerging crises. The crisis in Syria has already claimed many lives, and we have seen an unacceptable escalation in the form of the use of chemical weapons. We strongly condemn the use of such weapons, and Gabon calls for the destruction of all stockpiles of chemical weapons throughout the world. With regard to the investigations being carried out by United Nations inspectors in Syria, we call upon all parties to fully cooperate. Furthermore, Gabon supports all diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a political solution that will allow us to emerge from that crisis. In the event that its efforts are blocked, the Security Council must take measures.

With regard to Palestine and the State of Israel, the possibility of resuming talks with the impetus of the United States must be welcomed. Gabon still supports the broadly accepted view of two viable States, Israel and Palestine, coexisting in mutual security and respect within recognized borders.

With regard to the embargo on Cuba, Gabon reiterates its position in favour of lifting that ban because of its negative impact on the well-being of the Cuban population.

It is our obligation to transform our international institutions in order to make them more equipped to meet current challenges. The reform of the Security Council, enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly and the reform of the Economic and Social Council are all to be wished. It is essential for our common future that we assume that responsibility, in the spirit of the Charter. Assuring such a future calls upon our shared but differentiated responsibility and forces us to act for the well-being of humankind. On the basis of those convictions, Gabon will continue to be committed, within the Organization, to working for peace and development, which is also at the heart of the vision that I have proposed for the future of my own country, a future I wish for all countries.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Željko Komšić was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Komšić (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, as well as members of your team, and to extend to you my full support in your future work.

Plenary meetings of the General Assembly have always been an opportunity for Heads of State to gather and exchange their opinions about the world situation in order to try to find solutions for contemporary global problems.

My country's strategic goal of establishing a formal relationship with and membership in the European Union (EU) is based upon its ambition to become part of the big family of democratic States and therefore assure the full functionality of its own institutions and its further development on the basis of a free market and the rule of law, and especially human rights. Based on the direction and foreign policy activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, our focus remains on furthering our relationship and institutional relationship with the European Union, according to the Stabilization and Association Agreement and its full implementation. Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspiration to become a member of the European Union is based upon broad political census.

The fact that the process of European integration demands comprehensive political, institutional and legal adjustments in order to reach European standards in all areas is of fundamental importance to my country. We are also fully aware that the active participation of all segments of society of Bosnia and Herzegovina is necessary to expedite the process of European integration. I expect that expediting the remaining activities and the implementation of the *Sejdić-Finci* ruling of the European Court of Human Rights will lead to the fulfilment of the requirements for Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for accession to the European Union.

I also hope for a positive development in the process of fulfilling the conditions for activating the NATO membership action plan and further integrating Bosnia and Herzegovina into NATO security structures. I would also like to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the final phase of negotiations for accession to the World Trade Organization.

Allow me to emphasize again that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a very clear stance with regard to war crimes. All those accused of war crimes will be held responsible for the crimes of which they are accused before either international or domestic courts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina puts great emphasis on regional and subregional cooperation and dialogue among neighbouring countries, whose cultures and traditions have been present in the Balkans for centuries and who are currently at different stages of transition and democratic reform. Bosnia and Herzegovina is turned towards the future and to cooperation with neighbouring countries on the basis of mutual respect, as well as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The development of bilateral relations with all of our neighbouring countries and other countries in the region is focused on several key areas: Euro-Atlantic integration, advancing economic cooperation, strengthening regional cooperation and finding constructive solutions for current issues.

Our emphasis on regional cooperation is on the development of communications infrastructure as a basis for better economic, cultural and scientific ties, as well as overall regional development. The potential for regional economic ties is especially strong in the areas of industry, tourism, agriculture and energy.

I would like to especially emphasize our bilateral relations with the Republic of Croatia, which gained a new dimension and dynamic with the Croatian accession to the EU, which was marked by eagerness on both sides to find solutions that are in best interests of both our countries.

I must point out that we continue to live during one of the greatest economic and financial crises in contemporary history, which is certainly the greatest threat to global peace and security. We must do everything in our power to tackle its negative effects and consequences. Although the latest indicators show that some developing countries are coming out of the recession, that is not the case in poor and developing countries, where the consequences of the crisis are very harsh.

The institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been strategically working towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that, despite the difficulties caused by the world economic situation, there will be no obstacles in reaching our stated targets by 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina has finalized the development strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the social inclusion strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the strategy for poverty eradication has already been designed and implemented. All of that has been done in cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies in the country, whom we would like to thank for their close cooperation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is ready to contribute to global efforts to define a development framework and then to implement it in order to readily face economic, social and environmental challenges. Considering that the importance of the three aspects of sustainable development I have mentioned crosses national borders, Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that regional cooperation is crucial for the successful preparation of the new post-2015 development framework.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as all the other Western Balkan countries at this stage of integration, follows European Union policy and views with regard to the new development agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina consistently supports the position that sustainable development is possible only in harmony with nature. I am of the opinion that economic and political interests must not be an obstacle to achieving global consensus on a true beginning of the global fight for the preservation of the natural balance of planet Earth. It is often forgotten that climate change has a direct impact on development, poverty and hunger, and consequently on global peace and security. Short-term solutions will have long-term consequences, and the steps we take today will be our legacy for generations to come.

All of us present here agree that the United Nations needs continuous and comprehensive reform, which should be conducted with great caution, assuring a wide consensus of Member States. United Nations reform should provide for efficient and coordinated functioning of all segments and bodies of the system.

It is a widely held belief that Security Council reform is crucial for core reform of the world Organization. That reform, carried out with the consensus of the Member States, is necessary for reasons of efficiency and credibility, and it can be achieved only by taking into account the contemporary geopolitical reality, which differs from that of 1945. Only a Security Council reformed in that way can have full authority and responsibility in addressing the most important issues of international peace and security. That is the mandate entrusted to the Council by the Charter of the United Nations.

Dialogue and compromise are the best way to ensure the widest possible support, and Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the opinion that Security Council reform should be moved from a standstill as soon as possible. We also believe that a reformed Security Council should have an additional seat for a State from the Eastern European Group, as the number of countries in that group has more than doubled in the past two decades.

In accordance with that position, I would also like to emphasize that more engagement in preventative diplomacy is expected from the Security Council. We believe that more activity in the area of preventive diplomacy would help solve many problems and crises before they intensify, which would be a more efficient way for the Council to work. Encouraging dialogue to resolve critical issues by compromise, while acting against any kind of exclusiveness, especially in the area of human rights and human life, is of the utmost importance. Timely and efficient conflict prevention, rather than reaction to a crisis that has already escalated, is definitely a more effective and less costly approach to international peace and security.

We are eager to share with others the positive and the negative of our post-conflict and peacebuilding experience. Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that every crisis should be studied carefully, with careful consideration for the roots of conflict, the culture, religion and local customs and every other factor in order to find a just and long-term solution. There are no universal solutions for any crisis, and each one should be attended to and considered separately.

Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that it is necessary to take concrete steps to prevent nuclear proliferation around the world. In spite of visible obstacles of the past decade, there are new initiatives giving new momentum to the disarmament and non-proliferation process. We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved by encouraging Member States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to respect their obligations under the Treaty.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will sign the Arms Trade Treaty during the Treaty event.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is gravely concerned about the continuing violence in Syria, which has worsened the humanitarian crisis and caused unacceptable suffering for the Syrian people. We call on all the parties to comply with their obligations under international law and human rights law.

Resolving the crisis in the Middle East continues to be one of the most important priorities of the world Organization. We believe that all possible steps should be taken to create a positive climate in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. We expect all sides to refrain from any rash actions and to focus on launching this very important dialogue.

In order to play a constructive role in international relations and to contribute to self-sustainable peace and stability, Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan. In support of international efforts, we also actively participated in the United Nations missions in Liberia, South Sudan and Cyprus.

I would also like to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina remains very concerned that terrorist attacks around the world continue to take the lives of innocent victims. We are committed to fighting terrorism and believe that results in that regard can be achieved only through comprehensive cooperation and a partnership of as many Member States as possible.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is also following the situation on the African continent with great interest. We expect that despite the world financial and economic crisis, most developed countries will continue to increase their contributions to the official development assistence that is essential for capacity-building in poor African countries. Therefore, we welcome the activities of the United Nations through the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other efforts aimed at putting Africa on the road to stable and sustainable development, especially with regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. That particularly applies to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

We also support all efforts of the African Union, African Governments and the United Nations to improve the rule of law and democracy and to strengthen civil society and its institutions, in order to improve all aspects of society. We wish to point out that continued and greater financial aid to Africa is just as important as improving the efficiency and transparency of the use of aid funds for sustainable development.

In today's world, with political and social processes more dynamic than ever, we face challenges quite different from those of only a few decades ago. It is becoming clear that only a strong multilateral approach can produce good solutions. In its more than six decades of existence, the United Nations has seen many trials and tribulations, but it has always been, and continues to be, the only guide to a better future. It is still the only organization capable of providing solutions to the global problems we face.

It is up to us to make it stronger and more efficient, for only the United Nations — the most comprehensive and inclusive organization — can help bring progress and well-being to our planet. If we work together to implement all our agreements reached in this hallowed place, there is no doubt that we will live in better and more just conditions than exist today. On that path, we need to return to the basic values and principles of human rights, equality and world peace that are the foundation of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sleiman (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session, and to express my full appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has closely followed developments in the situation in Lebanon.

I particularly wish to point out the presidential statement issued by the Security Council on 10 July (S/PRST/2013/9), which provides an effective road map for what the international community can do to help Lebanon in order to preserve its stability, promote its institutions, support its economy and army and to help it face the growing burden created by the refugees entering from Syria. That is definitely the core objective of the meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon, which will be launched tomorrow afternoon, 25 September.

Many countries represented here have witnessed uprisings, civil wars or foreign aggression. Lebanon, too, has experienced many wars, which have led to influxes of numerous refugees in our territory. Against all odds, the Lebanese have sought to assume the responsibility for restoring the glory of our country as a space for freedom and coexistence and to hallow their presence in the East within the confines of a State that embraced democracy from its very inception while ensuring respect for diversity within unity as well as personal and public freedoms.

Through dialogue, the Lebanese will continue to develop their political system and improve their democratic practices. They will have to remain committed to the Baabda Declaration, which advocates Lebanon distancing itself from regional crises and axis politics. It is equally essential to reach an agreement on a national strategy to ensure the exclusive defence of Lebanon in the face of Israel's hostility and ongoing threats.

Nevertheless, however strong the Lebanese commitment may be, we still require the care and support of brotherly and friendly countries in order to address the repercussions of external conflicts and crises that threaten our security and stability and have negative impacts on our socioeconomic situation. The Lebanese look to assistance not only in the name of brotherly solidarity and the shared responsibility of the international community as a whole, but also in the face of events that pose a threat to regional and international security.

The first challenge is rooted in the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's security and economy. An existential challenge has arisen, related to the growing number of Syrian refugees on Lebanese territory, which is far beyond Lebanon's capacity to assimilate them. The number of refugees has already exceeded one quarter of the Lebanese population. As the Assembly knows, Lebanon is a country of limited geographical area and resources, as well as sensitive balances.

Therefore, while we understand that it is not possible to impose the impossible on nations, it is important for me to reiterate my call on the States Members of the United Nations to provide sufficient human and financial resources to manage the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and meet their humanitarian and essential needs, bearing in mind that the pledges undertaken at the meeting of donor States hosted by the State of Kuwait on 30 January have only been partially fulfilled; to expand infrastructure and reception areas for Syrian refugees within Syrian territories themselves and organize an international conference on the issue of Syrian refugees, with the aim of sharing the burden among different countries in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility while also assisting the International Support Group for Lebanon; and to garner support from all concerned States for the work of the International Support Group. Of course, all of that must take place while we work towards finding a political solution for the Syrian crisis that will preserve the unity of Syria.

Lebanon has called attention to the need to bring to justice the perpetrators of the crimes that have been committed. Solutions must be found to ensure that the conflict does not spread to neighbouring countries. Today, we have an opportunity to condemn all terrorist attacks perpetrated anywhere in the world, particularly in the Middle East.

I would like to comment on the attack that took place upon the historic town of Maaloula. That attack represents an assault on civilization and the tolerant spirit of religions. That is why the international community must adopt a firm stance in order to protect such sites, in particular through the adoption of an investigative mechanism that will assess the reality of the situation on the ground.

We must work to encourage the countries of the region currently engaged in conflict to ensure that the logic of dialogue and negotiation prevails and to keep Lebanon from getting involved in the Syrian conflict, while encouraging those countries to contribute the necessary assistance and support for the Baabda Declaration, just as the Security Council has pledged its support.

However, the main challenge that we face remains the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israeli settlement policy practices, not to overlook the difficulties created by it in terms of refugee flows. The settlement policy has fostered a sense of frustration and a tendency towards extremism. Lebanon has been affected by the daily Israeli attacks against Lebanon and its infrastructure through the use of all sorts of prohibited weapons. Lebanon has paid a high price for those acts of aggression, with all that implies in terms of the burden on human lives and destruction. It therefore falls upon the international community to work to find a fair and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East, particularly with respect to the Palestinian cause, pursuant to the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Stability, democracy and moderation will not prevail in the Middle East unless justice is done in Palestine, based on the belief that the security of the Arab region and the preservation of its cultural diversity are of strategic importance.

Lebanon calls for the adoption of an integrated comprehensive approach that includes the participation of all States concerned and addresses all aspects of the Israeli-Arab conflict. At the same time, no solution should be taken at the expense of its superior interests. As a result, Lebanon will reject any compromise attempting to force an influx of Palestinian refugees on its territory.

In this transitional period where the Arab world is undergoing major historic upheaval and deep-wrought changes, the world as a whole is witnessing an fundamentl structural transformation due to the amazing scientific progress that has been achieved, in particular in the fields of communication and information. That progress will contribute to globalization in all aspects of life. We must therefore convey a spirit of pluralism and diversity within all societies as a necessary condition in order to match the accelerating pace of change.

However, the regimes that run the affairs of peoples and societies have unfortunately not undergone a corresponding evolution at the intellectual level. On the contrary, we have witnessed conflicts exacerbated by extremist terrorism continue to spring forth fuelled by isolationism that rejects dialogue, mutual recognition and coexistence. That has even led some to call for the return to religious emirates and racial segregation. In order to do so, those groups have applied violent methods that flout peace and public freedoms.

Amid those unilateral fundamentalist tendencies, Lebanon remains a laboratory and a model of necessary coexistence for the future. That model must be allowed to benefit from support and stability because, as it has for decades, it has led to the education of students in our schools and universities and caused the security forces to fulfil their national missions in military camps in a spirit of unity. It is a model that is also experienced by the citizens on a daily basis on the streets of our cities, towns and in our capital, in the theatres, clubs, at the movies, in public and private institutions and in civil society organizations. The model, which has become a lifestyle, is lived with the sound of the church bells and the voices of the mosques' muezzins ringing in our ears, in particular at joint celebrations, the most significant of which is the Common Religious National Day, celebrated on the day of the Annunciation on 25 March of every year, when everyone is urged to seek the common good.

The management of diversity and the building of a culture of justice, peace and coexistence between cultures, civilizations and religions requires that we all make efforts at the following three levels.

First, we must work to improve the political, financial and social systems that govern the affairs of peoples worldwide, in particular the democratic system, to make them more humane and better suited to diversity. This must be done in such a way so as to guarantee the involvement of all components of society, in particular minorities, in political life and in the management of public affairs in all States, regardless of what ratio of the population such minorities may represent, but, rather, on the basis of their capacity and heritage.

Secondly, we must consider the preservation of an active presence on the part of minorities worldwide, with all the civilizations and specific characteristics that they represent, to be an international responsibility, especially in the Middle East. The Middle East is the cradle of the monotheistic religions, whose peoples have coexisted for centuries, forged civilizations and enriched the history of humankind through their culture and the values of tolerance, goodwill and friendship. That shared responsibility cannot be based on international interests in that part of the world while ignoring the communities living there. Rather, it should take into account the interests of all of those minorities and their right to participate in all aspects of the life of their nation, as they are an integral part of its fabric.

Thirdly, there is a need to intensify ongoing efforts aimed at reforming and developing the United Nations and its specialized agencies, so as to bring them into line with current realities and restore confidence in their capacity to resolve international issues, counter crime and adopt the appropriate resolutions and implement them without obstruction, free from selectivity and the policy of double standards. That would be an alternative to the logic of legitimate force that may be used by peoples whose countries have fallen victim to aggression and occupation, in the absence of a capable, guaranteed international mechanism.

For its part, Lebanon will remain faithful to the message of freedom and coexistence that are its hallmark, reiterating its commitment to implementing all decisions of international legitimacy and to upholding the spirit of moderation and agreement upon which Lebanon was founded. It will also remain an active partner in the context of the promotion of a culture of justice, peace and sustainable human development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

General Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.7

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 September 2013, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe .... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maurer (*spoke in French*): The world in which we live is profoundly changing, but whether it changes for the better is another matter. That is up to us. We often get the impression that great strides are being taken towards a better, more peaceful future. Unfortunately, reality imposes disappointing setbacks upon us.

I recall an important step taken 150 years ago. In 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded in Geneva, giving rise to a global movement. Thanks to their humanitarian spirit, representatives of that organization work to provide humanitarian help worldwide for people affected by armed conflict and other violent situations. The humanitarian work of the ICRC is based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. All victims of conflicts receive the same treatment, and help is granted to all vulnerable persons. All human beings are valued equally.

Alongside the humanitarian tradition shared by Switzerland and the ICRC, my country is proud of another tradition dating back centuries — neutrality. I would recall that for centuries Switzerland's foreign policy has been anchored in peaceful coexistence among States. Thanks to our neutrality, we maintain relations with all countries. We never take sides, but we can provide support or propose our mediation. Furthermore, our neutrality allows us to offer our good offices.

Humanitarian engagement is part of our history. It is an honour for us to make our neutral soil available for peace talks, and we will continue to do all we can to contribute towards peace in the world, in particular through our good offices. That impartial work is based on our belief that there are differences between people and between nations. Those differences are natural. Moreover, all human beings enjoy equal rights.

The protection of human rights is a key element of the Swiss commitment. Those rights are an expression of the obligations set out under international law and must be protected. Switzerland is concerned by the widespread excesses of violence and numerous human rights violations. It calls on all States and civilian actors to renounce violence.

In the Middle East, violent conflicts are imposing unacceptable suffering on the civil population. The situation in Syria has deteriorated to such an extent that

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humanitarian organizations are unable to cope. Serious and systematic violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights cannot be tolerated in any circumstances. Such crimes must not go unpunished, regardless of which side is responsible. That is why my country, together with 57 like-minded States, called on the Security Council in January to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. The use of chemical weapons is a particularly despicable crime. It is imperative to shed light on all facts. With that in mind, Switzerland welcomes recent developments.

I stress the need for the international community to spare no effort to pave the way for another conference at the earliest possible date in Geneva. That conference should result in a negotiated and lasting solution that would take into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians.

Switzerland is not the only country bound by the principle of equal rights. The Charter of the United Nations endows it with universal validity. The preamble reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women".

What applies to all human beings also applies to the States we live in. That is why, in the same sentence, after referring to the fundamental rights of all people, the Charter refers explicitly to the equal rights of nations "large and small". Under paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the Charter, the United Nations seeks "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples". Paragraph 1 of Article 2 states that

> "[t]he Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members."

I firmly believe that those principles are the keystone for the peaceful coexistence of all people and populations of this world.

But are we still sufficiently aware of this? Or are we prone to lose ourselves in grandiose ideas and minor details? I have the impression that in international politics too much is said of how things should be in an ideal world and too little about reality. I cannot help but feel that excessive bureaucracy creates a kind of parallel universe that leads to increased isolation. At the end of the day, that leads to increasingly higher costs and fewer concrete results.

Global problems need more than general discussions; above all, they require a search for solutions shared by all parties. The United Nations was created to find such solutions, and to that end it must be efficient, innovative and effective. Only thus will it be able to make progress in ensuring the equal rights of people and nations. Switzerland is firmly committed to contributing to that task. At present, certain developments are at odds with the shared values laid down in the Charter. I would like to address those subjects and launch a discussion on these worrisome developments.

As the representative of a neutral State with a long-standing humanitarian tradition, it is with some concern that I observe the growing resurgence of power politics. I note that large States are once again choosing to exercise their power and force and that they view smaller States less and less as equal partners. I sincerely hope that this trend will be reversed as soon as possible. Otherwise, the fundamental values of the Charter, which unite the international community and to which its members feel committed, will be placed in doubt.

As I have already said, the tendency towards power politics on the international stage worries me, for we believe that the countries on this planet should be free to choose their own futures, even as they respect others States and accept the rules of peaceful coexistence among peoples, without sacrificing their specific character. We believe in peaceful competition among economies. We believe in the diversity of the world — the peaceful diversity of sovereign States that treat one another fairly and as equal partners. People are free to draw up their own constitutions and to determine their own economic order and their own system of law. No State may impose its law over that of another country. Problems are not solved by diktat, but through negotiations. The shared norms and rules of international law exist to ensure that it is not simply the law of the strongest that applies. The principles of sovereignty and equal rights provide peace and stability and foster friendly relations between all peoples.

Those are the convictions upon which the Charter of the United Nations is based. Do we still share these convictions today?

The way in which large nations have acted in dealings with small nations recently has disturbed me because I often have the impression that force has often been placed above the law. The United Nations is active in a vast range of areas. There is perhaps a risk that it has taken on too much and lost sight of what is essential and concrete. The United Nations and its Member States often seem at a loss when the principles upon which the Organization were founded are at stake. Let us never forget what underlies these principles: the equal rights of people and the equal rights and sovereignty of nations. They are embodiments of the lessons of history, which has been a painful story of oppression, foreign domination and conflicts.

Together we must decide which path we want to take. Do we want to continue squandering our strength on issues of secondary interest? I believe that we should strive, here and now, to reaffirm and live out the values of the United Nations. Let us commit ourselves to achieving a peaceful world in which people and nations enjoy equal rights and are of equal value — a world in which right prevails over might. It is up to all of us here in this Hall to do all in our power to achieve that goal. Let us start without delay.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mujica (*spoke in Spanish*): I come from the South. At the conjunction of the Atlantic and the River Plate, my country is a gentle, temperate plain where livestock graze. Its history is one of ports, leather, salted beef, wool and meat. There were dark decades of lances and horses until finally, with the outset of the twentieth century, we were at the forefront of social, education and governmental affairs. I would say that social democracy was invented in Uruguay.

For nearly 50 years, the world saw us as a kind of Switzerland, but in reality in economic matters we were the bastard children of the British Empire. When the empire ended, we experienced the bitter and terrible terms of trade and we yearned for the past for almost 50 years, remembering Maracaná. Today, we have re-emerged in a globalized world, having learned from our pain.

My personal story is that of a boy — because I once was a boy — who like others wanted to change his times and his world and dreamed of a free and classless society. My mistakes were in part the results of my era. Obviously I take responsibility for them, but sometimes I cry: "If only I had the strength that I had when we enjoyed such utopia!"

However, I do not look towards the past because what we have today was created from the fertile ashes of yesterday. On the contrary, I am not on this planet to settle scores or to reminisce. I am greatly anguished by the future that I will not see, and to which I have committed myself. Yes, it is possible to have a world with more humanity, but perhaps today the main task is to save life.

I am from the South and I have come from the South to this Assembly. I share with the thousands of poor compatriots in cities, in the jungles, in the plains, in the pampas and the canyons of Latin America the common fatherland that we are creating. I bear upon my shoulders the indigenous cultures, the remains of colonialism in the Malvinas, and the futile and regrettable blockades of Cuba under the Caribbean sun. I also bear the consequences of the electronic surveillance, which does nothing but create the distrust that poisons us needlessly. I also come with a huge social debt and with the need to defend the Amazon, the seas, and our great rivers of America. I also have the duty to fight for all on behalf of my fatherland and so that Colombia can finally regain peace. I have the duty to fight for tolerance for those who are different and with whom we have differences and disagreements. We do not need tolerance for those with whom we agree. Tolerance is the foundation of peaceful coexistence, understanding that we are all different in this world.

I fight against the illicit economy, drug trafficking, theft, fraud, corruption — the contemporary scourges unleashed by an opposite set of values and by those who maintain that we are happier when we are richer, no matter by what means. We have sacrificed the old, immaterial gods and we are now occupying the temple of the Market God. This god organizes our economy, our politics, our habits and our lives, and even provides us with rates and credit cards and the illusion of happiness. It seems that we have been born only to consume, and when we can no longer consume we are overcome by frustration, poverty and self-loathing.

It is true that today, in order to spend and to bury our garbage in what science calls the carbon footprint, if in this world we aspired to consume like the average American, we would need three planets in order to be able to live. In other words, our civilization has mounted a deceitful challenge, and as we go on it is not possible for everyone to achieve that goal. Indeed, our culture is increasinglt driven by accumulation and market forces. We are promised a life of spending and squandering; in fact, it is a countdown against nature and against future humankind. It is a civilization against simplicity, against sobriety, against all natural cycles; worse yet, it is a civilization against freedom, which requires time to experience human relationships and the most important things: love, friendship, adventure, solidarity and family. It is a civilization against free time that does not pay, that cannot be bought and that allows us to contemplate the beauty of nature.

We have destroyed the real jungles and sown anonymous cement jungles. We have tackled a sedentary lifestyle with walking, insomnia with pills, solitude with electronics. Can we be happy when we are so far from the human essence? We have to ask ourselves this question. Stupefied, we have rejected our own biological imperative, which defends life for life's sake as a superior cause, and we have replaced it by functional consumerism and accumulation.

Politics, the eternal mother of all human endeavours, has remained shackled to the economy and to the marketplace.Going from one adventure to another, politics achieves little more than perpetuating itself, and as such it delegates its power and spends its time bewildered, fighting for the Government. Out of control, human history marches forward, buying and selling everything and innovating in order to negotiate what is, in a way, non-negotiable. Marketing exists for everything: cemeteries and funeral services, maternity wards, fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles, secretaries, cars and vacations. Everything is business. Marketing campaigns deliberately target children and psychologically influence older children to reserve safe territory for the future. Abundant evidence exists of such abominable uses of technology that sometimes induce mass frustration.

The average city dweller wanders between financial institutions and tedious office routines, sometimes moderated by air conditioning. He often dreams about vacations and freedom. He dreams about having the ability to pay his bills until one day his heart stops and he is gone. Other such soldiers will fall prey to the jaws of the marketplace, sharing in material accumulation.

The crisis really rests in the powerlessness of politics, which is incapable of understanding that humankind cannot and will not escape nationalism, which is practically etched into our DNA. Today, it is time to fight to prepare a world without borders.

The globalized economy has no other driving force except that of the private interests of the very few, and each nation State seeks only to maintain its own stability. Today, the great task for our peoples and our humble way of seeing things becomes the be-all and end-all. As if that were not enough, truly productive capitalism is a prisoner of the banks, which are at the summit of global power. More clearly, the world is clamouring for global regulations that respect scientific achievements, which abound, but it is not science that governs the world.

Today, we need a lengthy agenda of definitions. We must define working hours throughout the world. We need to have convergence among currencies. We need to finance the global struggle for water and against desertification. We have to figure out how to recycle more and how to counter global warming. What are the limits of each human task?

We must achieve a broad planetary consensus to unleash solidarity among the most oppressed and to punish and tax waste and speculation by mobilizing the large economies not to produce disposable goods, but rather useful goods without planned obsolescence or excess, which would help the world's poorest peoples. Useful goods could stand against world poverty. Turning to a useful neo-Keynesianism on a global scale in order to abolish the world's most flagrant embarrassments would be a thousand times more profitable than making war.

Perhaps our world needs fewer global organizations, organized forums and conferences, which serve only to aid hotel chains and airlines; perhaps no one really benefits from their decisions anyway. We must return to what is old and eternal in human life, along with science that strives to serve humankind, and not only the rich. With scientists, the counsellors of humankind, we can create agreements for the entire world. Neither the large nation States nor transnational companies, not to mention the financial system, ought to govern the world of humanity. Yes, lofty politics combined with scientific wisdom — it must come from science, which is not attracted by material gain but looks towards the future and tells us about things we may not foresee. How many years ago did they tell us in Kyoto about certain facts linked to climate change?

We have finally learned that intelligence must be at the helm, guiding the ship to port. Actions of this nature and others that we cannot name, yet which we believe to be crucial, require life and not acquired wealth. Obviously, we are not so naïve; these and other things like that will not come to pass. Many pointless sacrifices still lie ahead of us. We still must deal with the consequences and not tackle the causes. Today, the world is incapable of establishing global regulations for the planet, due to the failure of lofty global politics, which meddles with everything.

For a time, we were protected by more or less regional agreements, established to create a deceitful so-called free trade that in the end constructed protectionist, supranational barriers in some regions of the globe. In turn, important branches of industry and services dedicated to saving and improving the environment will arise. We will be comforted by that for a while. We will be distracted.

But of course, the accumulation will continue unabated, to the delight of the financial system. Wars and fanaticism will continue until nature calls us to account and makes our civilization non-viable. Perhaps our vision is too crude, not compassionate enough, and we view man as a unique creature, the only one on Earth capable of acting against his own species.

I reiterate that what some call our planet's ecological crisis is the result of the overwhelming triumph of human ambition. This is our triumph and our defeat, given our political impotence to fit into the new era that we have helped to build without realizing it.

Why do I say this? The numbers tell the story. The truth is that the global population quadrupled and gross domestic product grew by a factor of at least 20 over the past century. World trade has doubled approximately every six years since 1990. We could continue to list numbers that clearly establish the march of globalization. What is happening to us? We are entering a new era, and rapidly, but with our political bodies, cultural accessories, parties and young people all reduced to old age before the horrific and accelerating changes that we cannot even grasp. We cannot manage globalization because we do not think globally. We do not know if this is a cultural limitation or we are reaching biological limits.

The portents of revolution are present in our age as in no other in the history of humankind, yet our age does not have a conscious direction or even a basic instinctive direction, and still less organized political direction, because we do not have even the beginnings of a philosophy with which to face the speed of oncoming changes.

The greed that has been such a negative force and such a driver of history has also pushed forward the material, scientific and technical progress that has made our era and our time what it is and has enabled a phenomenal leap forward on many different fronts. At the same time, this very tool — the greed that pushed us to domesticate science and transform technology — is paradoxically pushing us over the edge into a shadowy abyss, towards an unknown fate, an era without history, and we are left without eyes to see or the collective intelligence to continue to colonize and transform ourselves.

If there is one thing that defines this tiny little human creature, it is that it is an anthropocentric conqueror. It seems that things come alive and submit to men. Glimpses of these things abound everywhere, glimmers that should allow us to discern these things, or at least make out the direction in which things are headed, but it is clearly impossible to make collective, global decisions about the big picture. Individual greed easily triumphs over our species' greed. Let us be clear. What is the big picture of which we speak? It is the system of global life on Earth, including human life, with all the fragile balances that make it impossible for us to continue as we are.

On the other hand — and this is less contentious and more obvious — in the West in particular, because we are indeed from the West, though we are also from the South, the republics arose to make the claim that men are equal, that no one is better than anyone else, and that Governments should represent the common good, justice and equity. Often, these republics become warped and fall into the habit of ignoring ordinary people, the man on the street, the common people. Republics were not created to outgrow their constituents, but instead are historical phenomena designed to function for their own people. They must therefore answer to majority and must fight for its interests.

As for the traces of feudalism that persist in our societies, or the domineering classicism, or the consumer culture that surrounds us all, in the course of their existence republics often adopt a way of daily life that excludes and holds at arm's length the common man. In fact, that common man should be the central cause of the republic's political struggle. Republican Governments should increasingly look like their respective peoples in the way they live and the way they deal with life.

The fact is that we tend to cultivate feudal anachronisms, spoiled affectations and hierarchical distinctions that undermine the best feature of republics — the fact that no one is better than anyone else. The interaction of those factors and others keeps us living in prehistory, and today it is impossible to renounce war when politics fails. Thus, economies are strangled and resources wasted. Every minute in the life of our planet, we spend $2 million on military budgets around the world — $2 million a minute. Medical research on all manner of diseases, which has made huge advances and is a blessing that promises longer life, receives barely a fifth of what is budgeted for the military. That process, from which we cannot escape, perpetuates hatred, fanaticism and distrust, fuels new wars and wastes fortunes.

I know that it is very easy politically to criticize ourselves at the national level, and I think it naive in this world to propose that resources that could be saved and spent on other, useful things. Again, that would be possible if we were capable of making global agreements and working on global prevention and world policies aimed at ensuring peace and offering the weakest among us guarantees that do not exist. Enormous resources would have to be cut to address the most shameful things on Earth, but one question suffices. Where can humankind as it is today go without those guarantees? Thus, each wields arms commensurate with his size.

And that is where we are today, because we can barely reason as individuals, let alone as a species. Global institutions, especially today, languish in the shadow of the dissenting great nations. Clearly, such nations wish to hold on to power. They block action by the United Nations, which was created in the hope and with a dream of peace for humankind. But what is even worse is that they have cut it off from global democracy. We are not all equal. We cannot be equal in a world where some are strong and others weak. As a result, our world democracy is wounded, and we face the historical impossibility of reaching a global peace agreement. We patch up diseases when an outbreak occurs as one or other of the great Powers wishes, while we look on from afar.

It would be difficult to invent a force that is worse than the chauvinistic nationalism of the great Powers. Nationalism, a force that liberates the weak through the process of decolonization, has become a tool of oppression in the hands of the strong. The past two centuries are full of examples. The United Nations is languishing and becoming increasingly bureaucratic from lack of power and autonomy, above all of recognition of democracy for the weak of the world, who are the majority.

By way of a very small example, our little country is in absolute terms the largest Latin American contributor of soldiers to peacebuilding missions, and we go wherever we are asked to go. But we are small and weak, and in the places where resources are distributed and decisions made, we cannot go even to serve coffee. In our heart of hearts we long to help humankind emerge from prehistory — and people who live with war are still living in prehistory, despite the many artifacts they can build — but as long as we do not emerge from prehistory and retire war as a resort when politics fails, that is the long march and challenge we have ahead of us. We say that in full awareness; we are familiar with the loneliness of war.

Such dreams, however, require us to fight for an agenda of world agreements that can begin to steer our history and overcome life's threats, step by step. Our species should have a Government for all humankind that supersedes individualism and creates political leaders who follow the path of science and not merely the immediate interests of those governing and suffocating us. At the same time, we must understand that the world's poor are not from Africa or Latin America; they are all part of humankind, and that means that we must help them to develop so they can lead decent lives. The necessary resources exist. They can be found in the waste of our predatory civilization.

A few days ago a tribute was delivered in a fire station in California. An electric bulb had been turned on for 100 years. It had been on for 100 years! How many millions of dollars have they taken from our pockets deliberately creating junk so that people will buy and buy and buy? But globalization means a brutal cultural change for our planet and for our life. That is what history demands from us. The entire material basis has changed and it has changed man. In our culture, we act as if nothing had happened. Instead of us controlling globalization, it controls us.

Almost 20 years ago, we discussed the humble Tobin tax, which could not be applied at a global level. All of the banks with financial power rose up against it. Their private property and who knows how many other things would be harmed. However, that is the paradox. With talent and collective work, with science, step by step humankind can make deserts green; humankind can bring agriculture to the seas; humankind can develop agriculture that lives with salt water.

If the power of humankind is focused on what is essential, it is infinite. Here we see the greatest sources of energy. What do we know about photosynthesis? Almost nothing. There is a great deal of energy in the world, if we work together to use it properly. It is possible to eliminate poverty from the planet. It is possible to create stability. It will be possible for future generations, if they begin to reason as a species and not just as individuals, to bring life to the galaxies and pursue this dream of conquest that we, human beings, have in our genes.

But if those dreams are to come true, we will have to control ourselves or we will die. We will die because we are not capable of being at the level of the civilization that we have been developing with our efforts. That is our dilemma. We should not spend our time merely correcting the consequences. Let us consider the deep-rooted causes, the civilization of waste, the present civilization that is stealing time from human life and wasting it on pointless matters.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let us remember that human life is a miracle. Consider that human life is a miracle, that we are alive as a result of a miracle, and that nothing is more important than life. Our biological duty is, above all, to respect life, promote it, take care of it, reproduce it and understand that the species is our being.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: In the year 2000, we met here and agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015. They are: Goal 1, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2, achieving universal primary education; Goal 3, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; Goal 4, reducing child mortality; Goal 5, improving maternal health; Goal 6, combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7, ensuring environmental sustainability; and Goal 8, developing a global partnership for development. As we can see, they cannot be sustainably achieved unless we achieve socioeconomic transformation. That means building a new society comprised of the middle class and the skilled working class out of the pre-capitalist societies that characterize underdeveloped countries.

Our old society of traditional Africa had and has to undergo socioeconomic metamorphosis, just like the insects do, taking on new forms of life — egg, caterpillar, pupa, adult butterfly or other insect, and so on — of the same organism. That means fewer people in agriculture than in industry and services, more people in urban centres than in rural areas, no illiteracy, and modern agriculture rather than subsistence traditional agriculture or uneconomic colonial cash crops that bring in little for the affected families. I hope that no one had imagined that we could sustainably attain the MDGs while maintaining a backward economy.

We in Uganda discovered the following bottlenecks to socioeconomic transformation.

The first is ideological disorientation. The second is a weak State — no army and a weak police, judiciary and civil service. The third is inadequate infrastructure, including inadequate electricity, lack of roads, lack of a railway system, lack of information and communications technology infrastructure, and so on. All of this means high costs for doing business in a given country. That scares away business, and without business there can be no employment, no production of goods and services and no expansion of the tax base. It is a vicious circle.

The fourth bottleneck relates to human resources that are undeveloped on account of lack of education and poor health. An illiterate and unhealthy population cannot be the agent of socioeconomic transformation. The fifth is the issue of small internal markets resulting from the colonial balkanization of Africa. Those had to be worked on through regional market integration. One cannot sustainably produce if sufficient numbers of people do not buy one's goods.

Sixth, a lack of industrialization and a failure to modernize services meant that we continued to export raw materials at 10 per cent or less of the final value of the final product, thereby losing money and jobs to the outside world. The lack of modern services meant that we could not attract tourists and had to import services from outside in the form of professional and medical services, inter alia, in addition to jobs not being created.

Seventh, the failure to modernize agriculture inhibits the earning capacity of the affected portions of the population and the country, stunts job creation and affects food security.

Eighth, the additional mistake was made of interfering with the private sector, influenced by an incorrect analysis of the national interest. Was the private sector causing the national economy to haemorrhage by repatriating dividends, or was it creating an infusion of fresh money and knowledge and expanding the size of the economy? Fortunately, that mistake has been corrected in Uganda and in much of Africa.

Those are the bottlenecks that directly affected the rate of socioeconomic transformation. I do not wish to go into the political bottlenecks here.

In Uganda, therefore, we were clear about all of those from the very beginning. It was not possible to talk of the MDGs sustainably without talking about those strategic bottlenecks. You could not sustainably base yourself on donor support to achieve the MDGs.

In spite of the fact that a number of mistakes were made by some of our actors, Uganda will have achieved the following MDGs by 2015.

First, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger — already achieved; second, achieve universal primary education — already achieved; third, promote gender equality — already achieved; fourth, reduce child mortality — already achieved; fifth, improve maternal health — achieving this one has been slow to be achieved because of mistakes on our side; sixth, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases — we are on track to achieve this, except as concerns new AIDS infections, which have increased slightly; seventh, ensure environmental sustainability by increasing the electrification of the economy, so as to stop the cutting of forests for firewood and for primitive agriculture by modernizing agriculture and shifting a greater portion of the population towards industry, away from agriculture.

We have been working on Goal 8, developing a global partnership for development, first and foremost by working for economic and political integration in Africa and for market access to the rest of the world on the basis of mutual advantage. The process of market integration in Africa has already started in the form of the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States.

As part of the global partnership, we should be very careful not to lose the easing in global tensions that came with the end of the Cold War. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus says :

> " By their their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." (*The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:16-20*)

A good system will prove its superiority by example. The Book of Matthew also states:

> "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (*ibid., Matthew 5:16*)

We do not have to create new global tensions in order to deal with criminals. Where there is a need for international action, regional and global consensus should be sought so that we unite the many to defeat the few and isolate the enemy to the maximum, as the late Chairman Mao Zedong used to say. Where there is a need to fight for freedom, oppressed people can fight for themselves. They do not have to be sponsored by external forces. Those who seek external sponsorship as their primary aim are suspect, to say the least.

Still on the issue of global partnership, I cannot fail to stress our anger vis-à-vis actors who are beginning to make it a habit to ignore African Union positions on African matters. One of our slogans in the decolonization struggle was "Africa for the Africans". Some people seem to think that that was an empty slogan. They are wrong. Although the patriotic forces have been taken by surprise by this renewed arrogance by the old mistake-makers, they will react appropriately to protect Africa from hegemony.

The latest manifestation of arrogance is from the International Criminal Court (ICC) in relation to the elected leaders of Kenya. Many African countries supported the establishment of the Court because we abhor impunity. However, in a shallow, biased way, the ICC has continued to mishandle complex African issues. That is not acceptable. The ICC should stop. Our advice to it is from very capable actors who know what they are doing and who know what they are saying. Kenya is recovering. Let it recover. We know the origin of the mistakes of the past. The ICC way is not the right one for handling those mistakes.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In our struggle for socioeconomic transformation, our biggest problem has been funding. The small modern colonial economy of Uganda was destroyed by Idi Amin. Initially, as we struggled for minimal economic recovery, we had to depend on external funding. Although useful, that funding was limited, slow in coming, not always focused, and erratic. Although our economy succeeded in achieving an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum over the past 20 years, we could have achieved much higher rates of growth, especially if we had had reliable funding for infrastructure.

Now that we have a little bit of our own money, we are able to implement infrastructure projects much faster. Even without oil and gas, we were able to move much faster in terms of infrastructure development by relying on ourselves. Of course, additional external funding, if it is focused, sizeable and on time, can be very useful. Without a doubt, Uganda and much of Africa are moving forward robustly. With the resources from the oil and gas we discovered a few years ago, we will be able to fund all our infrastructure needs. The future is bright and our forward movement is irreversible.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Fernández (*spoke in Spanish*): I would particularly like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and his country Antigua and Barbuda, a member of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. It is an honour for all Latin Americans that he is presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

I would like to begin by expressing our solidarity with the victims of the attacks in Kenya and Pakistan, and generally to all the victims of the terrorist attacks occurring in various parts of the world. I say this not out of formal sympathy or for reasons of protocol, but because our country, Argentina, along with the United States of America, is the only one on the American continent to have suffered a terrorist attack — in our case, on two occasions: in 1992, when the Israeli Embassy in the city of Buenos Aires was blown up, and two years later, when the Jewish community centre AMIA in Argentina was bombed. Some of the relatives of the victims are here with us, as always, and I can see them from here. Clearly, we are talking about victims. These were not soldiers or fighters. They were people who were getting on a bus, perhaps entering a bar or going to work, and who were surprised by an explosion. They had not taken part in any war; they were not combatants or soldiers; they had not chosen to go and fight. So I am thinking of those victims and their families, who deserve our solidarity and the strongest possible condemnation of all forms of terrorism.

In the context of this sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, we see the Syrian question as a common thread. Almost in a premonition, only a short while ago I was here at the United Nations, presiding over a meeting of the Security Council, of which Argentina is a non-permanent member for 2013-2014. On 6 August, just about a month and a half ago, we proposed a measure to reform the Security Council. We stated that the functioning and the rationale of the Council actually reflected another era, that of the Cold War, when fear of nuclear holocaust had led to the creation of the Organization, uniting the forces that had defeated Nazi Germany, and then produced a bipolar world. That fear of nuclear war resulted in a system with veto power so that no one would be able to push a button and blow up the world. The fact is that that instrument, which worked in 1945, has now been shown to be dysfunctional and completely obsolete — and not only as regards the Syrian question, but also when it comes to dealing with issues affecting peace and security around the world.

Incidentally, I would like to express my appreciation for the fact that for the first time we have been given the opportunity to speak at such a late hour of the day, because it has somewhat interrupted the inertia of the course of the meeting. There are times when we come to these meetings with a format, almost a monologue, that makes it difficult to present arguments or counter-arguments that take into account the statements made by previous speakers. I have listened very carefully to almost all of the addresses given earlier today. Obviously, I paid particular attention to those that touch on the global decision-making system, and, of course, because I am a staunch supporter of multilateralism, I paid a lot of attention to the first address, by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

In many of those statements I heard mention of 21 August. On 6 August, we spoke of the need for Security Council reform and of the fact that the right of veto is no longer necessary. There should be a system — such as those used by regional organizations of the Americas, such as the Union of South American Nations, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States or the Southern Common Market and its associated States — in which decisions are taken by consensus. Why is that? Governmental administration is different, as the power of veto is necessary in order to govern. When dealing with conflict resolution and management, if one party to the conflict, or an interested party, has the right of veto, that right necessarily becomes an obstacle to the resolution of the conflict. We did not know what would occur 15 or 16 days later. Many have noted that the crisis in Syria erupted on 21 August.

In fact, it is extremely difficult to understand that the current crisis in Syria was only recognized on 21 August, when we became aware of chemical weapons. Syria has been caught up in that conflict for over two and a half years. Over 150,000 people have lost their lives and 99 per cent of them died as a result of conventional weapons — not chemical weapons. I remember that at the last meeting of the Group of Twenty (G-20), during a discussion about Syria, I asked, "What is the difference between a death resulting from bullets, anti-personnel mines, missiles or hand grenades, and a death resulting from chemical weapons?" Each is more or less equally shocking. As it is not the first time, why is there talk of chemical weapons as if it were the first time that chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction have been used?

I recall a statement made by another leader today with reference to the terrible gas chambers of the Nazis, the gas in the trenches and the chemical weapons used in other instances. I also remember hearing about and reading about — as I had not yet been born — the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the consequences of using those weapons on many generations of Japanese people.

I remember when I was much younger — the President of Uruguay also recalled the time of his youth, I was less than 20 years of age, and many others will probably also remember — when napalm and phosphorous were used during the Viet Nam War. That was recorded forever in the Pulitzer prize-winning photographs of naked boys and a naked girl. I remember, as if it were today, that naked young girl running down a road after having been hit by napalm in a bombing.

I also remember, in all fairness, the suffering of the people of the United States when they saw the doors of the planes open and they saw the corpses of the soldiers who had gone to fight being removed, wrapped in black plastic bags. I can imagine the pain of each girlfriend, each sister, each wife, each daughter of the soldier who had died, trying to understand why. Many did not understand why the soldiers had had to lose their lives many thousands of kilometres away from their country. It is so irrational, so unjust. There are no just wars. Only peace is just.

On 6 August, in the discussions on the issue of peace and security, it was stated that peace and security are not military concepts; rather, they are political concepts. Today, I was pleased to hear the Secretary-General mention that very concept, which we had referred to in the Security Council — namely, that peace and security are not military but rather political concepts. Therefore, we welcome the fact that an agreement has been reached on the question of Syria. My country opposed direct intervention — bombing. It was quite simple. The argument that, in order to avoid deaths, you would cause even more deaths could not be sustained by any reasoning or even common sense. We did not speak out at that time only to speak. Furthermore, we were not discussing just any country, but one with great respect for the norms of international law.

My country, Argentina, has signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), making Argentina one of the most advanced countries — if not the most advanced country — in developing nuclear power for peaceful and scientific purposes. We sell nuclear power generators to Egypt, Algeria and Australia. We also use nuclear energy for medical purposes. We do not condemn the use of nuclear energy for warfare while at the same time deploying nuclear submarines. That has been our experience, for example, in connection with the sovereignty dispute involving our Malvinas Islands, since the United Kingdom has militarized the southern Atlantic region and sent nuclear submarines. We have no double standards. We are not hypocritical. We have not only signed the NPT but are also parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), as was also mentioned by the Secretary-General in his statement.

In other words, when we speak of condemning dictators, we are actually parties to the Rome Statute and can be brought before the Court. We are also members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, D.C. It is curious that many who speak of respect for human rights, the relevant institutions, international law and the ICC and often refer to human rights have not signed the treaties on the subject.

If one is to speak of human rights, Argentina has accomplished a great deal. We were a founding Member of the Organization and promoted the creation of a human rights secretariat within the United Nations and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. I am joined here by the head of the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo. She was also with me in Paris to sign the treaty, of which we are a founding party.

I referred to human rights because there was something said today about human rights in another speech. It has been said here that if this is the world in which people want to live, then they should say so and be prepared to face the cold logic of mass graves. Argentina too can speak of mass graves. Even today, well into the twenty-first century, we continue to come upon mass graves that hold the remains of the thousands of prisoners and those who disappeared under the genocidal dictatorship that began 24 March 1976, which was similar to the one that took power on 11 September 1973 in our sister republic of Chile, overthrowing the democratically elected Government of Salvador Allende.

How wonderful it would have been, after all the speeches condemning genocidal dictators, if someone back then had come to the aid of the Argentine and Chilean and so many other peoples of the American continent who, in the midst of the Cold War, were the sacrificial victims of murderous dictators. But it was also said here that, if those who cared about human rights were moved to act on someone's behalf, perhaps if that concern had at least coincided with the interests of some great Power, they would have acted differently. We have spoken of those things here, including the need to put an end to that double standard, and we have said that the resolutions and decisions of a multilateral organization such as the United Nations must take place on a level playing field for the weak and the strong, the small and the large.

We have been waiting since 1965, when the plenary and many resolutions of the Assembly and the Committee on Decolonization required both Argentina and the United Kingdom to sit down to hold a dialogue — another word that I have repeatedly heard in every speech. There is a dispute over the matter of sovereignty over the Malvinas, and yet,the United Kingdom has turned a cold shoulder. And so we continue with double standards, which some people do not like to hear mention of. But hypocrisies are like witches; evidently, they exist.

I have also heard — I should add that I have heard with pleasure, so not everything has to do with double standards — that there has at last been recognition, as an essential basis for beginning to untie the Gordian knot that the matter of the Middle East represents, of the need to recognize the State of Palestine and the right of the State of Israel to live securely within its borders. Moreover, I think it has quite rightly been said that it is impossible to achieve security for the State of Israel unless there is also recognition of the existence, and support for the viability of the physical existence of, the State of Palestine. We can do no less than agree on that characterization.

I have also heard the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I have heard the comments that the great Powers have made about that change of Government. If I understood correctly, there appears to be a kind of new expectation of change in the face of the new authorities in the Republic of Iran, with which, as the Assembly knows, we have a disagreement that stems from — a cause of mine — a formal case by the Argentine judiciary against five Iranian citizens in connection with their participation in the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina. It has now been 10 years since, for the first time, on 25 May 2003, then President Néstor Kirchner called in this same Hall for the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate in clarifying the facts of that case. Year after year until 2007, he continued to do so, and from 2007 until today I myself have also continued to do so. A little over a year ago, we received a reply from the then Foreign Minister of Iran offering to initiate talks and reach an agreement on cooperation. Why? For a very simple reason. Because the case has been stalled for 19 years. Nothing has moved. If there are five Iranian accused, the only one with whom I can and must speak so that the judge can take a deposition from those five citizens is obviously the Republic of Iran. That seems very obvious, but often in this peculiar world, even in my own country, which is also a bit peculiar, obvious things have to be explained.

I have also heard today about imperfect choices. I liked that expression, which was used by one of the Presidents. I think that when Argentina spends 10 years asking for cooperation and then suddenly someone finally says "Fine, we are going to talk; we are going to cooperate", there was no other possible choice except to sit down together. That issue used was internally in our country to attack us politically, and here too in the United States by the vulture funds to pit us against the United States Congress and say that we were reaching an agreement, a treaty, with Iran. But on what? Nuclear weapons? No. On a strategic alliance to attack the West? No. On an agreement to convert to Islam? No. The agreement was simply to unblock the procedural impasse in order for the Argentine judiciary to take depositions from the accused, while at the same time ensuring due process through a commission of international jurists who would be neither Iranian nor Argentine and whose actions would not be binding.

The treaty was approved in my country nine months ago. I could almost say that the baby is about to be born, if I were to put it in biological terms or in terms of childbirth. It was approved by all the appropriate organisms, including the Parliament. It was published in the official bulletin. The world knows that Argentina has duly complied with that treaty. To those who found it so convenient for Iran — after nine years with no news or notification or agreement from the Iranian authorities, I wonder if we were not right ourselves when we affirmed and said that it was a way to unblock the issue.

The fact is that there is now a new Government to whose speeches I listened attentively, and a President who declared in statements I read that he in no way denied the Holocaust. That is very important. At least it is important to me and to many citizens around the world. Even today, he specifically declared that through the recent election, by displacing a leader whose positions we have all heard, so there is no point in repeating them, Iranian society had proved that it wanted more moderate positions. We have heard, from this very rostrum and these very microphones, that there is a will to agree, to talk, to be an open and peaceful democratic society, and to act in goodwill.

The President of France referred to the nuclear case as the important matter pertaining to Iran; I would like to speak about the issue of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina as the other major issue. They said they would make gestures by opening up to negotiations, and that they did not want weapons for military use. In other words, as I understood it, they were saying that they would adhere to what we support, which is non-proliferation. Now we wait to be told if the agreement has been approved, or when it will be. Moreover, we await the announcement of the date for the establishment of the commission, as well as a date for the Argentine judge to travel to Tehran — yes, to Tehran; we are not afraid and we will go there.

We believe in the goodwill of people, and there is no reason for us not to believe that they actually want peace. Everyone who has spoken here has said they wanted peace and that they loved one another, so we believe everyone. But we also hope to see everyone acting consistent with their words and actions. I therefore wanted to put this specific question on the table. I have no doubt that, if the words we have heard here are true, we will see a positive response. I say that to avoid any misunderstanding as to our deep conviction and belief in the rules of international law, and also to make it clear that our patience does not mean that we are naive or even foolish. We think that more than enough time has gone by, and we think answers are now needed. The victims deserve this. The Islamic Republic of Iran deserves that too, if it really wants to show to the world that this is a different Government and that its actions are also different. I trust that this will be the case. I have no reason to think otherwise.

As for other matters that I wish to discuss, let me say that we are "serial abiders" when it comes to the norms of international law. We are also "serial victims" of other unwritten rules that are nevertheless very important in today's world of finance and economics. They are norms not written by the major international financial centres or the risk-rating agencies or those that speculate, like the vulture funds, when it comes to dealing with countries that, like Argentina, defaulted on their debt, in the case of Argentina in 2001.

There has also been talk here of poverty and the need for children to have access to education. I wish to read out two paragraphs of the address by the Secretary-General. The first has to do with weapons, wherein he speaks about poverty and points out that

> "at a time of pressing human need, spending on weapons remains absurdly high. Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions of dollars on deadly weapons." (*A/68/PV.5, p. 3*)

For the record, Argentina does not produce any chemical weapons, or even sell conventional weapons. It would be interesting to find out — as I mentioned at the G-20 — who supplies weapons to the rebel groups that are fighting the Syrian Government. It goes without saying that the Government of Syria possesses the weapons of a State. We would like to know who supplies the weapons to those who fight the Syrian Government. This is not about taking any sides; rather it is just about putting forward something that is quite logical, for the weapons trade is today a real business.

Did we really have to wait for 1,000 people to die as a result of chemical weapons to realize that 150,000 others had died before them? Why was an arms embargo not declared two years ago to prevent so many deaths? Well, that should be answered by those who sell weapons. We do not sell them and therefore cannot give an answer to that question — although we suspect what it would be.

I would also like to read out another very significant passage in which the Secretary-General talked about the economic situation. Although the question of Syria has been the common thread running through the whole Assembly, it is clear that the economic crisis that started here in the United States with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2008 still, despite all speeches and things we have seen and heard, continues to generate volatility and fragility. The latter is a term that was often invoked, and not just in the G-20.

We see millions of people unemployed around the world, a situation that very much reminds us of that in Argentina in 2001 when we defaulted on our own debt. This is linked to the fact that we are also serial victims of the unwritten rules of the lobbyists, of risk-rating agencies and of those who trade in financial derivatives and speculate like vultures hovering over countries in default, buying securities at very low prices and then attempting to make millions. That is the Argentine case, but it could be the story of any other country, very soon in fact.

Since the Government of former President Néstor Kirchner first took office, on 25 May 2003, Argentina began to explore how to emerge from its debt, which accounted for 160 per cent of our country's gross national product. We had 25 per cent unemployment, a poverty rate of 54 per cent and more than 30 per cent in extreme poverty. Many countries could perhaps see themselves mirrored in that state of affairs.

In 2005 we organized the first restructuring process, which was accepted by 76 per cent of our creditors. During my own Government in 2010 we reopened the debt-restructuring process and managed to secure the approval of 93 per cent of our creditors. Consider that, in any country that has insolvency laws, when companies go bankrupt the law requires the agreement of at least 66 per cent of the creditors in order for the bankruptcy judge to make the remaining creditors accept the terms — at least, that is the case in Argentina. I think the number is the same in the United States, that is, 66 per cent. In addition, here in the United States even municipalities can declare bankruptcy, and a judge may decide that, if the sustainability of the municipality is at stake, an even lower figure is acceptable.

The fact remains that in 2010 Argentina reached agreement with 93 per cent of its creditors. Since 2005, Argentina has consistently and in a timely manner paid each and every one of its debt maturities, so much so that the last payment was made only a few days ago. That involved a bond subject to Argentine domestic law, payable in Buenos Aires. We paid $2.07 billion, and today our debt to gross domestic product ratio is a little under 45 per cent, down from 160 per cent, as I mentioned before. Much of the debt is actually public-sector debt. The foreign-currency-denominated debt of Argentina is only 8 per cent of gross domestic product, due both to national and foreign private holders. I would reiterate, however, that we have been in strict compliance.

In 2008, seven years after Argentina defaulted on its debt, the vulture funds, as we call them, swooped in. The United Nations is caught between the vultures of debt and the hawks of war. It is worse than Hitchcock's *The Birds*, since Hitchcock, at least, was a good director. But what is certain is that bonds were purchased for $40 million, and they now wish to collect on that while disregarding the creditors' agreement to certain arrangements and extensions. The creditors, like any group of creditors, wanted to be repaid and so approved certain arrangements and extensions. But the vulture funds want to recover the whole nominal value of the bonds, without arrangements, extensions or delay. From the $40 million that they initially bought in the so-called self-regulated markets, they will recover $1.7 billion. So from 2008, we are talking about a yield of over 1,300 per cent.

I would like to ask the Secretary-General where we can find businesspeople devoted to creating jobs, innovating and investing in production if, in this kind of casino economy, somebody can buy $40 million in defaulted bonds and then secure a court decision that enables them to collect $1.3 or $1.7 billion.

This is not only an Argentinian problem; this is a problem that involves the whole world. This is why we wish to thank the Republic of France for having gone to the United States Supreme Court and presented itself as amicus curiae. We also thank the former head of the International Monetary Fund, Anne Krueger. She is not and has never been a very good friend of Argentina's, but she also did that.

We also remember the former United States Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O'Neill, who, when it was decided to leave Argentina to its own devices in 2001, amidst a social and institutional crisis that left 30 people dead as a result of violence in the streets, said that American plumbers should not have to pay for an Argentine fiesta. Today, I say that the millions of Argentines who went back to work, the millions of Argentines who can once again entertain hopes and dreams, the scientists who returned to the country and the children who once again have access to education do not have to pay for the lobbyists' fiesta. These lobbyists, by participating in political campaigns and contributing money to the politicians' campaigns here, have the lobbying power they need to destabilize the international financial system. Is that not remarkable? And such a short time has elapsed between Paul O'Neill's assertion and what we are saying today.

We are not asking for anything. We just want to be allowed to pay. It is remarkable. We started by defaulting on our debt and now they will not let us pay it back. It seems almost absurd, in a world that is grappling with debt restructuring involving millions of men and women. Even here in the United States, there are men and women who are unemployed and have lost their homes, not to speak of the devastation we see in Europe.

Obviously, Argentina and many of the countries represented here today do not have the good fortune of being countries that issue reserve currencies, but we have expressed our willingness to honour our commitments. I think this should be recognized, unless the idea is to use a country like Argentina as an example, because it was able to climb out of the hole, to create jobs and generate growth, and to pay its creditors without applying the prescriptions that the International Monetary Fund tried to impose upon it.

Incidentally, there is also a need for global market regulation and market interventions. Wonderful statements have been made in the Group of 20 regarding tax havens, ratings agencies and capital flows, but what is certain is that the world needs global laws for global governance. Just as we ask for Security Council and General Assembly resolutions to be respected, we also ask for rules and for respect for the sovereignty of countries, especially those countries like ours that wish to honour their commitments.

Finally, I would like to address the Assembly on this very special day. Today we see war, human rights violations and other violations intertwined. Perhaps some are of a more subtle nature, such as losing one's job, one's rights, one's livelihood or one's hope. I think, at the core, our duty as world leaders is to build a truly different history.

Many of those who have already spoken have made somewhat ambivalent statements. Some have been encouraging, while others have been disillusioned as a result of not having been able to do what they wanted, almost as if their desire to do something had just been a whim, and when they were not allowed to, they grew frustrated. I believe that the one thing we cannot do when we have the responsibility of governing and when we might be able to govern a country with a lot of power is to lose our temper or, even worse, make mistakes. Making mistakes is the one thing we should not do, because mistakes are not paid for by the leaders who make decisions or imperfect choices. Mistakes are paid for in human lives, not only if we are talking about war, but also if we are talking about the economy. In that case, they are paid for in terms of unemployment, lack of access to health care, education, housing and security.

There is cheap labour available for drug trafficking, which we talk so much about fighting. One of the keys to fighting drug trafficking is to put an end to cheap labour in emerging and underdeveloped countries. We must also put an end to money-laundering for drug trafficking in central countries, because the money is not laundered in the countries that produce the raw materials. Money-laundering takes place in the central countries. It is right to say this, because we hear so much talk about drug trafficking and other things.

I would conclude with a phrase by the Secretary-General that I really liked. I thought his invitation was most appropriate. It was specifically an invitation to turn hope into action through hard work, commitment, dignity and integrity. He ended with the words "with passion". I am a person with a lot of passion. Some say that I am sometimes a bit too passionate and a bit too forceful in my statements. "With passion", he said, but above all with compassion. He said that we can build a future that the people want and the world needs with passion and compassion.

It is not the first time I have heard this word. I must confess that I heard it many years ago, and very often, in my own country. Perhaps I did not understand it at the time, this passion. It was used then, and is still used today, by a cardinal from Argentina who is today Pope and whom I would also like, as a Christian, to thank for the key role he played in dealing with the question of Syria. Compassion and passion — that means the passionate embrace of hope, of the future, of the things that are yet to come, and compassion for those who are less privileged, for the most vulnerable, for those who are waiting for so many things, who have done nothing to deserve extreme poverty and be Godforsaken, and compassion for all those who are victims — of war, of unemployment, of extreme poverty and misery — in other words, of our own failures as world leaders.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Banda: Allow me to congratulate President Ashe on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. Let me assure him of my full support and cooperation and that of my Government during his tenure of office. His credentials and experience as a career diplomat here at the United Nations assure us of a successful session.

It is indeed an honour for me to have the opportunity to address the Assembly once again. In my maiden address last year, I spoke of the challenges that Malawi faced at the time that I assumed the office of the President of the Republic of Malawi. I outlined my Government's commitment to addressing the political and economic governance problems that I inherited. I sought to achieve macroeconomic stability and restore the rule of law and the observance of human rights.

The reforms my Government has undertaken have been painful but necessary. I am therefore pleased to report to the Assembly that Malawi is registering a strong economic recovery. For instance, foreign exchange and fuel are available, the currency has stabilized, inflation is declining, and industrial production is up from 30 per cent in 2012 to 75 per cent in 2013. Economic growth is forecast at 5 per cent this year, up from 1.8 per cent last year. Furthermore, Malawians are once again enjoying their freedoms and civil liberties, as enshrined in the Constitution.

I am pleased to say that Malawi, the "warm heart of Africa", is warm again, and my Government is committed to staying the course with these reforms. In moving forward, my agenda is to build on the foundations we have laid in order to realize sustainable and inclusive growth.

Today we are gathered here to reflect on the progress made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to debate the post-2015 development agenda. Before I provide my reflections, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to ensure an inclusive global debate on the post-2015 development agenda. As I understand it, more than 750,000 people from 194 countries provided their views, indicating their readiness for bold change. I am pleased that Malawi was one of the countries selected for the national consultations.

I believe that in Malawi and beyond, the MDGs have played an important role in concentrating our efforts around the common purpose of eradicating poverty. They have raised public awareness about unacceptable levels of poverty and helped to mobilize action towards a fairer world.

At the same time, the MDGs have provided a common framework for monitoring progress and highlighting areas of achievement as well as challenges. Yes, they have transformed the way in which both developing and developed countries approach development cooperation.

Malawi is on track to achieve four of the eight MDGs: reducing child mortality, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. However, like other countries, we are unlikely to meet the Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal access to education, ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women, and improving maternal health.

As the deadline for the MDGs draws closer, Malawi is stepping up its efforts to accelerate their attainment. We have identified best practices as well as bottlenecks in the context of our progress. In particular, we have understood that gender inequality and lack of empowerment of women are the common constraints limiting our progress towards the MDGs. In response, my Government has developed a new MDG acceleration framework that places significance on removing these barriers once and for all.

In building the foundations for the post-2015 architecture, I want to reflect on the lessons from Malawi's experience in the implementation of the MDGs.

First, I believe that the strength of the MDGs lies in the fact that they are focused and targeted. That has helped us to narrow our focus and concentrate our efforts on the most critical issues while allowing local ownership. In the case of Malawi, the MDGs were localized through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy.

Secondly, the past 13 years have taught us about the importance of the linkages between these Goals. A poor family is not just economically deprived. It is also likely to face a host of other challenges such as environmental vulnerability, abuses of human rights and lack of or limited access to essential services. Lifting people out of poverty therefore requires a holistic approach.

Thirdly, strong political will and the transformation of partnerships have accelerated the attainment of most of the MDG targets. Finally, I wish to make a cautionary note that we need to be aware of the fact that different continents were at different stages of development when we established the MDGs. That created pressure, sometimes leading to unintended consequences. In the case of Malawi and other countries, in our efforts to achieve universal access to education, the quality of education was compromised, yet access and quality should not be separated.

We all recognize that the task of developing and achieving consensus on the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" may not be an easy one. However, we know a lot more today about what works and what does not work than we did 13 years ago. We know that in order to achieve real and lasting change, we must be committed. We know that in order to inspire and motivate action, we must be bold and ambitious. We know that in order to maximize our resources and talents, we need smart partnerships.

The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda provides a strong foundation for a new framework. I applaud in particular the overall vision of ending extreme poverty by 2030. I also commend the focus on, among other things, empowering girls and women, creating jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth and ensuring good governance and effective institutions. I am aware that many people have argued that the best strategy to achieve the MDGs is to realize growth in the gross domestic product. However, I am of the view that that idea is premised on a top-down-approach. In my opinion, it is income for poor households that must come first. The issues that affect population growth — malnutrition, girls' access to education, maternal health — are all rooted in poverty and, particularly, in a lack of income at the household level. If we have to overcome those challenges, we need to promote policies and programmes that bring decent incomes into households.

In that regard, my Government has sought new partnerships with the private sector, local communities and development partners in order to deliver development in more innovative ways. My Government is focused on transforming rural economies and breaking the vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty. We have decided to invest in improving the livelihoods of poor people in rural and urban areas. That transformation initiative is aimed at modernizing our rural communities by bringing a standard package of interventions in health, education, water, sanitation and housing.

The Government has also rolled out the Malawi Rural Electrification Programme, which aims at spurring industry, trade and agricultural productivity through the provision of electricity. The Government is also implementing a community saving and investment programme to promote a culture of saving and building assets to enhance income and wealth creation. I see that leading to the majority of the poor being active participants in our economy.

If we cannot uplift the people that live in rural areas, as is the case in many developing countries, so that they can earn a decent income in the household, the vicious cycle of population growth, malnutrition, maternal risks and poverty will remain. If the post-2015 development agenda is to realize its dream, we need to go to the grass roots, where the people are.

For that reason, I welcome the idea that under the post-2015 development agenda, we should track progress against our goals by looking at them across all levels of income. That will drive equal opportunities for people across all income groups and help us realize our dreams of shared prosperity. That is key to restoring the dignity of all our people.

Finally, let me emphasize the need to attain global peace and security. We are all aware that conflict, instability and civil unrest disrupt our development efforts. As we look forward to the post-2015 agenda, we should recommit to global peace and security. As a mother and grandmother, I felt compelled to make this appeal.

Malawi will continue to engage fully in the post-2015 development agenda. I am hopeful that the voice of the poor, of women, of people with disabilities and of the marginalized will be included in the agenda. I am optimistic about a world of shared prosperity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sata: At the outset, I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. John. Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am confident that his wisdom and skill will be brought to bear as he steers the Assembly through a year of progressive dialogue and challenging negotiations.

The theme of this year's session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is timely, as it presents an opportunity for us to discuss the future of global development. To that end, I wish to assure the President of our delegation's support as he discharges the function of President at this session.

The African continent has this year also reached a significant milestone. In May, together with the rest of the continent, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity, the forerunner to the African Union. The African Union is a symbol of the collective hopes and aspirations of our resilient continent. As expected, that occasion formed the basis for mutual reflection on the future direction of a young and versatile Africa. Furthermore, next year, our country will commemorate 50 years of its independence. We approach that milestone proud that Zambia continues to enjoy political stability and has embraced democratic principles that have formed the basis for social and economic transformation for improving the lives of the Zambian people.

Our country is also honoured to have played a significant role in peacebuilding initiatives within the subregion and the continent at large and continues to participate in them. Zambia will therefore remain committed to the ideals for which she has stood and is prepared to contribute to global efforts aimed at uplifting humanity.

To address the aspirations of our peoples, in particular those of the most vulnerable nations, we as a global community meeting in this Assembly set ourselves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — eight clear targets that resonate with our populations' aspirations. In less than two years, we will have reached the deadline for the attainment of the MDGs, and Governments will have an opportunity to take stock of the achievements made in efforts to attain the development targets set at the turn of the century.

We are all champions of the MDGs. We have run the race, and we continue to run the race, albeit at different paces and on different terrains. What remains critical, therefore, is what we do between now and the deadline, as well as how we will move beyond 2015.

Amid much anxiety, the 2013 progress report for my country was released in May. On a positive note, the report indicated the tremendous progress made by Zambia on MDGs 4 and 5, regarding reducing the under-five mortality rate by two thirds and the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015. I emphasize here that maternal mortality is rooted in gender inequality, which manifests itself as poor education for girls, early marriage, adolescent pregnancies and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health care. The results therefore tell us that with more effort, gender inequality can be redressed.

Zambia's MDG report further indicates that we have made great strides in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The challenges are still immense, and we have to ensure that those living with HIV and AIDS are receiving the best care and access to social protection services. All efforts must be made to reach zero infection and zero deaths by building on what has been achieved so far. International support is equally critical for a sustained and enhanced response.

The Zambian economy is presently enjoying macroeconomic stability and has experienced appreciable economic growth over the recent past. However, our Government still has the huge task of ensuring that the basic needs of Zambians are met, as poverty levels and unemployment remain a challenge. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have made marginal progress in reducing the prevalence of hunger. In order to accelerate Zambia's efforts to achieve MDG 1, our Government has taken an unprecedented and painful step in curtailing subsidies on fuel and maize. That has enabled us to release much-needed resources for programmes that are deliberately targeted at poverty alleviation. We have also transformed and repositioned social protection services to optimize efficiency.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank estimate that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa can be expected to be higher than the global average — around 5.5 per cent in 2013 and 6.1 per cent next year. However, in the absence of inclusive social development and without food security, that growth risks being undermined by social exclusion, particularly for the youth. For instance, while our Government recorded a growth in gross domestic product of 7.3 per cent in 2012, we recognize the fact that it is equally important to ensure that we put in place specific measures that will promote equality and social justice in the labour market. It is for this reason that we are strongly advocating for investment that creates real and sustainable employment prospects for our people, while at the same time making our economy more labour-absorbent.

In turning to the post-2015 agenda, our Government believes that the importance of the intergovernmental processes on sustainable development goals is critical and cannot be overemphasized. I wish to reiterate the need to have a single set of universally agreed sustainable development goals reflecting sustainable development priorities that are actionable and concise and whose implementation will resonate with the different development and economic levels of Member States. Furthermore, the goals will need to be prudently balanced and to effectively integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. To that end, it is necessary to build global partnerships that are supported by commitments to regional and international cooperation, anchored with mutual accountability, enhanced local private sectors and public-private partnerships.

Our Government believes that addressing issues of poverty is important for the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development in the future we want for Zambia. Our country attaches importance to improving the welfare of our people, especially women, children and young people, through wealth and employment creation, the provision of quality education and of quality health care, and industrialization, among other things.

In particular, our Government wishes to emphasize the need to mainstream children's issues, including access to quality education and quality health care services, provided at the right time. Social protection and upholding the rights of all children is critical and should transcend the global desire for a better future. It is therefore imperative that the post-2015 agenda take into account the momentum that has been attained in the realization of the MDGs in order to ensure continuity and sustainability.

My address to the Assembly would be incomplete if I did not underscore Zambia's, and indeed Africa's, desire to realize a more democratic and representative Security Council. As a continent, our voice could not be clearer. We continue to call for greater progress in those negotiations, whose conclusion is long overdue. I wish to reiterate our position, as defined in the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations boasts of an all-inclusive multilateral process, but that is obviously lacking when it comes to the Security Council. The effectiveness of that organ should be enhanced by adapting it to the prevailing global realities of international peace and security and the legitimacy realized through an all-inclusive process.

In conclusion, allow me to express Zambia's gratitude for the support received in the recent hosting of two important United Nations conferences, namely, the twentieth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization and the fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I therefore take this opportunity, on behalf of my Government and the Zambian people, to thank all those who participated and contributed to the success of those meetings. We look forward to the opportunity to host again in the near future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Sweden.

Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Reinfeldt (Sweden): The world is constantly changing and the pace of change is increasing every year. The world is a very different place today compared to 10 years ago when the Millennium Development Goals were set. But it is important to understand the nature of the changes and to draw the right conclusions, because only then will we be able to have an influence and shape our own future.

We are seeing the fastest reduction in poverty in human history. Child death rates have fallen, meaning that 14,000 fewer children are dying every day. Deaths from malaria and tuberculosis are decreasing. New HIV infections are declining. People are living longer. One hundred years ago, the average life expectancy in Sweden was less than 60 years. Today, many children born in my country will live to celebrate their 100th birthday. Those are truly amazing developments.

The world economy is growing. This year, developing and emerging countries' share of the world economy will surpass the share of developed countries. In 10 years' time, they will dominate the growing world economy.

We see the same pattern in expanding global trade flows. The share of developing countries' exports has grown substantially and now accounts for almost half of all exports in the world. That creates jobs and growth for everyone and increases global equality. Technological change is also rapid. Seeking information from the other side of the globe is now part of everyday life for many people, not only for the privileged few. As an example, the number of mobile phone users has risen from fewers than 1 billion to more than 6 billion. But challenges are still abundant, and it is crucial that we intensify our efforts to achieve the existing Millennium Development Goals.

Sweden continues to contribute 1 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. Sweden is a firm believer in multilateral organizations, in international cooperation and in the United Nations. The United Nations plays a key role in coordinating our efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that together we can become hopeful instead of helpless. Therefore, Sweden contributes approximately $1.2 billion yearly to the United Nations system. That makes us the second biggest contributor per capita to the United Nations in the world — that is something we are very proud of.

In addition to the existing Millennium Development Goals, we must also work to establish a strong post-2015 development agenda, with the objective of eradicating extreme poverty, raising standards of living for everyone and offering equal opportunities to everyone. In that regard, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the three areas that I believe are central to human and economic development: gender equality, democracy and free trade. Those areas have the capacity to influence developments in many other areas at the same time.

When I addressed the General Assembly two years ago (see A/66/PV.19), I spoke about the most important human rights failure of all — the one that affects the largest number of human beings, namely gender inequality. I want to raise that issue once again, because that challenge is as present and as urgent today as before.

Gender equality is first and foremost a question of ensuring the same human, economic and social rights for half of the world's population, something that should be self-evident. Every year, 1 billion women are still subject to sexual or physical violence. Women are still refused equal access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. Every day 800 women still die from preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Legal restrictions still exist preventing women from owning, inheriting and acquiring property in many countries. Many girls and women are still refused access to schools and education. For many women the idea that a Government would have more female than male ministers, like in Sweden, seems utopian. Many of those women are not even allowed to vote.

Against that background, Sweden was one of the countries that gave strong support to creating the entity UN-Women and is today one of its biggest donors. It is our firm belief that by ensuring gender equality one also improves a country's productivity and economy and the rule of law. Educating girls and women leads directly to an increase in a country's economic output. Educated mothers place higher value on schooling for their children. Closing the gap between male and female employment rates increases a country's gross domestic product substantially. Increased participation by women in politics and business leads to clear improvements for the public good and to less corruption. The inclusion of women in peace processes makes peace easier and more stable. Let me be very clear: it is simply neither acceptable nor very smart to discriminate against women and girls.

To achieve sustainable development, we need a democratic governance that encompasses all individuals. We need a system that covers not only the State, but also the private sector and civil society organizations. We need a governing system that is accountable and transparent with regard to its actions. Nevertheless, nearly one third of the world's population lives under authoritarian rule, a serious barrier to development. With the growing economic power in many developing countries comes an opportunity and a responsibility to use that power wisely and for the common good of everyone.

Every person's human rights must be respected, regardless of origin, religion, handicap, gender, sexual preference or transsexual identity. Only then will society reap the benefits of all human resources. Only when people can freely express their political opinions and freely participate in a thriving civil society can they truly participate in the lives of their communities. That also applies to freedom on the Internet. Only with functioning courts do people feel safe to make investments and develop their businesses. Only with respect for the rule of law can we tackle organized crime and corruption. Only with democratic principles can we ensure freedom from conflict and violence.

Violence and oppression in all their forms are among the main threats to the development of people and the development of societies. We know that it takes, on average, seven years to fight a civil war, and 17 years to recover from a war. That is why conflict is sometimes called "development in reverse". As we speak, there are several major ongoing conflicts, resulting in death and suffering, hunger and disease, and rape and sexual violence. Those conflicts are depriving men, women and children of their right to a prosperous life and a future of hope. A focus on fragile States will remain necessary.

The civil war raging in Syria for more than two years must come to an end. Those responsible for systematic violations of human rights, including those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, must be held accountable. The conflict must, however, be handled within the United Nations system. There is an urgent need for a political solution to the conflict and a transition to a free and democratic Syria.

It is time for a new era in which countries in conflict can join the rest of the world in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For that, we need a strong United Nations and a well-functioning Security Council.

I want to thank all peacekeepers and peacebuilders of the United Nations for their efforts and sacrifices. Sweden will further contribute to and participate in those efforts. We also give strong support to the areas of democracy, human rights and freedom from violence. Sweden is one of biggest donors to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are trying to help out though humanitarian assistance for the crisis in Syria and by receiving refugees. This year alone we have welcomed 16,000 Syrians to Sweden.

Let me mention a third area that we need to focus on in the post-2015 development agenda, namely, trade and competition. Protectionism is very expensive. It raises prices and lowers standards of living. Let me illustrate this by a striking example. According to the World Trade Organization, consumers and Governments in rich countries pay $350 billion per year supporting agriculture. That is enough to fly their 41 million dairy cows first class around the world.

Allow me to mention some other, maybe more down-to-earth, examples. When competition was introduced for mobile phone companies in some countries, the cost of calls fell by 30 to 50 per cent. Studies show that lowering service barriers by one third under the Doha Development Agenda would raise developing countries' incomes by approximately $60 billion. Unfortunately, progress in the Doha Development Round has been slow. But the good news is that many countries are doing what they can to liberalize trade through regional agreements instead, because they know that that will benefit their economies.

The two free trade agreements now being negotiated — between the United States and the European Union and between the United States and a number of countries in Asia and Latin America — will cover two-thirds of world trade. That will create jobs and growth. Sweden is one of the countries within the European Union working the hardest to get the transatlantic deal in place. Freer trade and openness also mean that new impulses and trends affect a country faster. That puts pressure on reform in countries and companies to meet global competition. Sweden is an example of that.

Trade has made it possible for us to double our economic output. Our companies have learned that they must consistently take on new trends and technology in order to stay competitive. If they did not, our gross domestic product and standard of living would fall significantly. Let us also remember how important trade is for peaceful relations. To put it very simply, no sales person wants to start a war against a country where he has customers. That would be a bad business strategy, so trade promotes peace.

Climate change continues, leading to extreme weather conditions in many parts of the world and the loss of lives and very high costs for society. The European Union's and the United States' emissions are falling, but overall global emissions are increasing. That is why all countries need to contribute to the international efforts in the fight against climate change. The European Union and the United States cannot solve the problem of climate change on their own, when they only account for around 25 per cent of today's emissions.

The international structures we have to deal with climate change commitments are unfortunately obsolete. We need a new agreement that ensures that all major emitters make commitments that are sufficient so that we can reach the two-degree target.

It is our duty to strive for a society and a world that gives everybody the possibility to create his or her own future. That is what every woman, every man, every girl and every boy deserves. Let me underline that it is in the very interests of every country, because people are the real wealth of a nation. The Millennium Development Goals have been very successful in coordinating and focusing our efforts on the areas where progress has been most urgent. Now we need to prepare for tomorrow. In doing that, Sweden is convinced, the United Nations will play a very important role. We will continue our strong support to the Organization.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Sweden for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 9.25 p.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.8

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 25 September 2013, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe .... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Touré (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: The central theme of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly is sustainable development. With its three main pillars this constitutes a comprehensive agenda, even more comprehensive with all of its prerequisites: conflict prevention, bringing peace and security to war-torn countries and bringing perpetrators to justice through the implementation of international law. Helping the weakest to help themselves, shaping economies that pay focused attention to social-agenda and environmental issues and that effectively use e-technologies, protecting human rights and supporting the rule of law and democracy — these are all integral parts of sustainable development.

The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda notes that Governments bear the primary responsibility for assuring sustainable development and for improving the lives of people in their territories. Sustainability can be truly implemented, however, only if we instil it in the core thinking of Governments, societies, individuals and the international community as a whole.

Let me start with what is clearly and without a doubt the most unsustainable situation in the world at the moment: the conflict in Syria. It has been repeated thousands and thousands of times, and must continue to be repeated over and over again, that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable under any circumstances and requires complete and unreserved condemnation. It is clear that chemical weapons must be destroyed quickly and verifiably. Therefore the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Security Council must — and I emphasize must — move forward and agree on the legally binding terms to resolve that issue, preferably under Chapter VII of the Charter, as soon as possible.

Even without the use of chemical weapons, the military actions and brutality which have occurred in Syria have created suffering and a humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions. More than 110,000 people have been killed, and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are scattered around the

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region. About 7 million Syrians are in urgent need of assistance.

While there is no quick or easy fix to that complex situation, we must keep doing what we can to ease human suffering. Estonia is one of many countries that have been focusing on helping those who have been forced to flee from their homes and protecting the most vulnerable members of society: women and children. I would also like to praise the good work of UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and humanitarian workers in Syria who often by risking their own lives, have been able to organize and deliver assistance.

Evidence collected by the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry indicates that war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations have been systematically committed in Syria. Estonia is among the countries that joined the Swiss initiative in January, asking the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. It is the responsibility of the international community to protect, if a Government fails to do so.

In contrast, let me turn to a country and conflict where hope has been restored recently. That presidential elections in Mali were carried out in a peaceful and transparent manner has paved the way for optimism. The newly elected President has many important tasks ahead, beginning with reconciliation between the southern and northern parts of Mali. I wish Mr. Keita all the luck and energy he will need to rebuild his country, and I can assure him that Estonia stands among the countries that will continue to help if needed.

I venture to say that another country whose future looks promising is Afghanistan. I believe that responsibility and ownership make people masters of their own fate, and I can see the willingness of Afghans to avail themselves of that opportunity. The international community must continue to assist that country in order to ensure that their efforts will bear fruit. As a long-term partner of Afghanistan, Estonia remains committed to assisting with the training and financing of Afghan security forces after 2014, while continuing to support educational progress, women's empowerment, the rule of law and health care.

It is also sadly true that conflicts can at times be alarmingly sustainable. For years, Estonia has emphasized that protracted conflicts around Nagorno Karabakh and in Georgia and Moldova must not fall off the radar screen of the international community. Without the will of all the involved parties, no lasting solutions can be found.

Every year, over half a million people die as a result of illegal or irresponsible arms transfers. Enormous amounts of money and resources are spent on arms, often at the expense of far more vital needs. We view the adoption in June of the Arms Trade Treaty, within the framework of the United Nations, as a historic milestone for the world community.

As a responsible member of the international community, Estonia strongly supports and contributes to the activities of the International Criminal Court and the ad hoc tribunals established by the Security Council. We continue to call for more States to ratify the Rome Statute and the amendments to the Rome Statute relating to the crime of aggression. Universality is key to ensuring that the perpetrators of the worst crimes of concern to the international community are held accountable. Accountability and the prevention of atrocities have been the priorities of Estonia as a current member of the Human Rights Council. In the Council, we also focus on the rights of women and children and on their disproportionate suffering during armed conflict.

The post-2015 sustainable development agenda should transform the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into Sustainable Development Goals. In the meantime, we have learned that the MDGs should have focused more on reaching the poorest and most-excluded groups in society. The main challenge of the post-2015 negotiations will be to formulate and reach global agreement on one concrete and measurable set of development goals that would keep the three dimensions of sustainability in its core and maintain a strong focus on poverty eradication. The targets should leave no one behind and be applicable and achievable in every country.

In many societies, women and girls are the main drivers of development. Not allowing them to fulfil their potential through education, decent job opportunities and essential health services is to disregard the potential of one half of humankind. It is also important to remember that persons with disabilities have been one of the most excluded segments of our societies, although they often have serious difficulties with access to basic social services and decent job opportunities.

Official development assistance will continue to play an important role in the sustainable development of many countries in the future, but it cannot compete with the flow of international private investment nor with domestically mobilized resources. Therefore, synergies between different sources of finance, better policies and strong national ownership are necessary. Nonetheless, the main drivers of sustainable development are inclusive and responsible economic policies. A key enabler of growth is the bold use of modern integrated circuit technology solutions. They promote better governance, access to public services, job creation, transparency, accountability and civil society participation.

That brings me to two issues of worldwide importance: cybersecurity and Internet freedom. The two are intrinsically linked and in no way incompatible. Moreover, they will require a multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance. Freedom of opinion and expression, online or offline, is a cornerstone of every democracy and constitutes a fundamental human right. Last year, the Human Rights Council affirmed that very same principle. I am glad that the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Cyber Issues affirmed that international law is essential in promoting an open, secure and accessible cyberspace.

In our fight against cybercrime, it is essential to raise awareness and to work on prevention by everyone, from private computer users to large critical infrastructure and cloud providers. Raising the awareness of political leaders and national governments is equally important; cybercrime may have serious consequences for national security as well as national wealth. Yet the Council of Europe's 2001 European Cybercrime Treaty — renamed the Convention on Cybercrime because participants are from all over the world, and also known as the Budapest Convention — remains thus far the only legally binding international instrument that addresses cybercrime. Needless to say, the more countries accede to it, the more functional it will become. We find it odd that those countries with the largest sources of cybercrime have not acceded to the Convention, while in other areas they stress the primacy of international law.

The United Nations has had and will continue to have a leading role in making the world sustainable. Yet Governments can do and must do their own fair share. Estonia, for example, proudly continues to support the initiatives of civil society in contributing to sustainable development. Approximately one half of the world's countries have joined our 2008 initiative "Let's Do It!" to make people's environments cleaner and our planet environmentally happier.

Let us remain alert and tuned in to every single detail that prevents us from advancing our common well-being, be it in developed or in developing countries. Let us be united in that common effort.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martinelli Berrocal (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for my country to congratulate Mr. Ashe upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. He can count on the unconditional support of the delegation of Panama during his tenure. We cannot think of a more appropriate theme for this high-level debate than to focus on "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". The theme invites us to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to work towards an agreement on the new development agenda. The agenda will be available for our people and the planet.

The 13 years that have elapsed since we identified a way to achieve development through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have witnessed the fastest reduction in poverty in the history of mankind. In that connection, we as Panamanians have had great pleasure in carrying out studies indicating that half a billion fewer people now live below the poverty line, that infant mortality rates have fallen by over 30 per cent, and that deaths owing to malaria have declined by a quarter, among other things.

Panama has presented three national reports on the MDGs. They have demonstrated our country's progress in improving the living conditions of our population and in setting the issue of poverty as a priority on the social agenda and focusing the Government's contribution on achieving clear, concrete and measurable goals to reduce poverty and the inequality gap. We have made notable progress in various areas. That is where we need to redouble our efforts so as to provide Panamanian citizens with a better future and so that all may benefit from a better Panama.

In 2012, along with 17 other countries, Panama received the Americas Award for reducing poverty and hunger. On behalf of the people of Panama, we recently accepted an award from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization for reaching the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, between 1990 and 2015, by halving the number of people who suffer from hunger and by reducing the prevalence of undernourishment by 50 per cent or more, with respect to the levels in 1990-1992, now below five per cent. We are pleased with the work we have done.

For the first time in history, humankind has the technological, economic and sociopolitical structures to eradicate extreme poverty. With an agenda for development coordinated between the public and private sectors and civil society, we can carry out a meaningful process that makes a difference and reaches everybody. Because of its capacity and scope, the United Nations has played a facilitating role, unlike that of any other organization, in order to coordinate the global conversation about development, and it has a special responsibility to its Member States to provide information, analytical thinking and experience from the field.

In that regard, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for establishing a United Nations task force and in particular for convening the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, whose extraordinary efforts are now giving us more insights into a more productive discussion about what path we should follow. The post-2015 agenda should focus on eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the Earth within a set time frame. Countries have learned much about development. We have realized that development that is not sustainable is simply not development.

The MDGs were silent on conflict and the effect of violence on global development, nor was the impact and importance of institutions that guarantee freedom of expression and the rule of law for development included. The Government of the Republic of Panama believes that we need to integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of development more sustainably. For that we support the efforts resulting from decisions made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro and the work resulting from the meetings convened for the establishment of the High-level Political Forum.

Global inequality is still prevalent and very much a part of this conversation. Some 1.2 billion people account for only 1 per cent of global consumption. The Republic of Panama has successfully reformed its trade, tax policies and transparency. In the same manner, we have reviewed the regulation of our financial markets and productivity. As a result, we have, as far as possible, charted a successful path towards development. It is clear that now we face even greater challenges, different from the previous ones.

Financing development is not easy, but we have a great capacity and the patterns of productivity are becoming more sustainable and equitable. Panama supports the view that the post-2015 agenda must make sustainable development a cornerstone and not leave anyone behind.

The original promise of the MDGs must be kept. The new route towards development must be transformed from reducing poverty to ending extreme poverty. Furthermore, the fight against inequality must be a substantial part of our development agenda and should be measured by the social inclusion generated from economic growth. The promotion and protection of universal human rights must be an integral part of a post-2015 development agenda.

Similarly, institutions and the rule of law must be evaluated as contributions toward the development of countries. Equally, a sustainable planet is crucial not just for the growth of our peoples, but also for their survival. Finding a solution for global environmental problems should be a priority of the development agenda. That is why we support the integration of sustainable development objectives into the post-2015 agenda.

Panamanians believe that unless we forge a global partnership, nothing we say in this Hall will be effective. We need a new spirit of mutual accountability that supports the post-2015 agenda and the work done by the United Nations towards that end. There is no doubt that the post-2015 agenda will depend on new economic partnerships and financing.

The post-2015 agenda cannot possibly succeed without the active support of the Group of 20 and the institutions of economic cooperation and governance, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. The General Assembly has been given an historic opportunity to promote a platform for global development, with so many leaders present here, together, with only one theme in mind. We believe that effective political leadership emanating from the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and its forum can give us decisive momentum to make a legitimate change to our post-2015 agenda.

As we ponder the post-2015 development agenda, we cannot set aside the purpose for which this Organization was created, namely, to ensure the maintenance of world peace, through undivided and full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people on Earth, without any discrimination.

In that regard, we cannot let this moment pass without expressing the deep concern that Panama shares with many members of the Assembly on the grave situation in Syria. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population of Syria. We share the view that such acts constitute a crime against humanity that should be investigated and punished in accordance with the norms of existing international law. We firmly call upon all members of the Security Council to assume their responsibilities to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and international protection of the human rights of the Syrian people.

We are concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle East and the veiled and open threats of the use of nuclear weapons, which infringe on the right of countries and peoples to live in peace in their territories. Our global Organization has the supreme duty to speak forcefully and clearly in support of world peace and the right of humankind to continue living on our planet. In this crucial time for life and survival on Earth, we must not fall into the habit of believing that nothing serious is happening and that life will still go on after the atomic mushroom cloud delivers its final verdict of death to every species on the planet. The number of interested parties in the Middle East with nuclear power and the capacity to introduce and test weapons of mass destruction in a conflict situation is sufficiently large that those of us gathered here cannot afford to ignore what is happening there. This is no time to hide our heads in the sand like ostriches, thinking that we can thereby stave off the danger that threatens us and save our lives. It is rather the moment to firmly demonstrate our collective responsibility to defend world peace and life itself.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that my Government is aware of a request made by the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to extend its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. Without objecting to the right of the Republic of Nicaragua to make such a request, as stated in paragraph 8 of article 76 of the Convention, my Government wishes to express its strong concern about the fact that the coordinates given in Nicaragua's application constitute an unquestionable infringement on our maritime space and on treaties between the Republic of Panama and its neighbours, resulting in a reduction of our maritime area of 49,892.54 square kilometres.

The serious concern on the part of the people and the Government of Panama is not motivated by Nicaragua's request to extend its continental shelf but rather because, despite the fact that our two countries are connected through friendship, geographic and regional proximity and political and economic integration, we were not consulted before the request was made, so that we could consider all of its possible effects. The Republic of Panama, in accordance with its national Constitution, complies with the standards of international law and has always recognized the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as one way of achieving the pacific settlement of disputes, as laid out in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we should also emphasize that according to article 59 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, the decisions handed down by the world's highest universal tribunal should neither benefit nor harm third parties. My Government is therefore compelled to categorically reject the Republic of Nicaragua's attempt to delimit its maritime boundaries in this manner, since it violates existing treaties with the Republic of Panama that we have complied with in good faith, as well as our legitimate maritime rights, recognized and accepted by the international community in that area. In accordance with international law, I will produce all the necessary evidence to correct the Republic of Nicaragua's efforts in this matter. But on the occasion of the current session, officials from both our countries have begun the process of resolving our disagreement, which I hope will soon reach a happy conclusion.

Today I also wish to mention a third issue that is very important to Panama, the case of the merchant vessel *MV Chong Chon Gang*, sailing under the North Korean flag, detained in Panama since mid-July. My country, as a State Member of this international forum, complies with the norms and regulations of its internal bodies, and article 4 of our Constitution requires Panama to comply with the norms of international law. That mandate has governed all of our acts as a nation. The vessel in question was transporting undeclared war materiel from the Republic of Cuba destined for North Korea. Acting on intelligence that we obtained, we detained the vessel before its transit through the Canal on the suspicion that the cargo contained drugs. When the ship was seized, an enormous amount of war materiel — which, by definition and because of its destination, clearly violated Security Council Sanctions Committee mandates — was discovered hidden under 200 tons of raw sugar.

In compliance with the mandates in question, my Government notified a panel of experts and invited them to Panama to verify the findings and confirm our initial impression, as presented by the drugs prosecutor who initiated the investigation under the Republic of Panama's laws. The panel inspected the cargo and later made a preliminary report in accordance with Security Council resolutions. The evidence is now with the Security Council. My Government would like to emphasize the significance of the action it took, not just as a Member State but also in its promotion of respect for the decisions of this body and of the peaceful coexistence of nations. We are talking here about an unprecedented and possibly unique situation, at least on our continent, which is why I stress its importance today. Panama complied with its duty as a Member State, even in the face of possible risks, high material costs and potential consequences to be defined in accordance with Panamanian law, as outlined in Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009) and 2094 (2013).

As President of a sovereign nation, I have not come before this forum to demand action against the countries involved in the incident. Panama simply desires and requests recognition that our conduct was based on our firm wish to comply with the rules that the Organization has laid down. We will respect the results of the investigation, and we wish to make it clear that Panama has no issue with the States involved in the matter, which is why its settlement is not a bilateral one. We Panamanians did our duty, and the United Nations must now also do its duty, at a time when following the rule of law is the only way to solve the delicate international problems that threaten the peaceful and human coexistence of the peoples of the world.

Panama and its people anxiously await just recognition of their act, which we see as an important precedent for our hemisphere. We call on the international community to implement programmes and solutions conducive to peace. Panama reaffirms its historical position that we should use the tools of mediation and dialogue to deal with all current conflicts in the region and to seek solutions that defend and protect the right of peoples to live and work in peace.

Since the end of my term is approaching and this is the last address I will give to the General Assembly, I wish to say that I feel the satisfaction of a task completed as I leave Panama in the place it now occupies in the world. We leave behind a legacy of social and political stability and sustained high economic growth throughout the Latin American region, and we have helped to promote and build the common welfare of the Panamanian nation.

I would like to cite some favourable statistics that illustrate our growth and social welfare, published by entirely credible international entities. On the index of human development for 2012, according to the United Nations, Panama is classified as a country of high human development, scoring 0.780 as compared to the average for Latin America, which is 0.741, and for the world as a whole, which is 0.694. In a country of 3.63 million inhabitants, 1.83 million are men and 1.79 million are women, according to the United Nations *Human Development Report 2013*. On the literacy index, Panama is at 94.1 per cent, also according to the *Human Development Report 2013*. Panama invests 4.6 per cent of its gross national product in public expenditures for culture and health, the highest level in Central America, according to the Genral Treasury of the Republic. Average life expectancy in my country is 76.3 years, according to the *Human Development Report 2013*.

When it comes to the enjoyment of political rights, we have a rating of 1 according to Freedom House in 2012. Panama's competitive ranking on the 2013 index of the World Economic Forum was forty-eighth out of 148 countries reviewed, and its Fitch investment rating was upgraded from BB+ to BBB, indicating a stable perspective. Our Moody's rating was Baa2, a stable perspective, and according to Standard and Poors we rose from BB+ to BBB, again indicating a stable perspective.

The latest United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report shows Panama as one of the highest ranked Latin American countries for maritime connectivity. According to the 2013 index, Panama improved its score from 42.38 to 44.88, similar to Mexico, which moved from 38.81 to 41.80, while Brazil dropped from 38.53 to 36.88. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean estimates that Paraguay leads Latin American growth with an increase of 12.5 per cent in gross domestic product, followed by Panama, with 7.5 per cent.The International Monetary Fund estimates regional gross domestic product growth in the region as follows for 2013: Paraguay at 11 per cent and Panama at 9 per cent. In sum, Panama is on a firm path to full development, and with the support of the international community we will continue responsibly to meet the challenges that still face us in order to achieve the sustainable development for the well-being of all our citizens.

The year 2013 has been one of great international events for our country. We will soon have the honour for the second time of hosting a Summit of the Americas, the thirteenth, when Heads of State and Government will discuss the Ibero-American community within the new global context as it pertains to the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. In November, we will also host the forthcoming Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which reflects the priority that our country accords to the struggle against corruption as a factor in development. In a similar vein, we will continue to advance projects for the establishment in our country of a regional hub for humanitarian assistance and of a regional centre of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean. That project will serve as our contribution to the international community, with respect both to humanitarian actors and to the United Nations system, and expresses our full support for their efforts on behalf of those most in need.

I am an optimistic man. I believe in human intelligence and in the capacity of our species to recognize errors and dangers in order to change course and ensure our continuity on this planet. Moreover, the nation of men and women of which I am the leader shares the dreams of a world united by its respect for life and by the way it values and loves the vast cultural heritage that has been built by generation upon generation of people. I am convinced that however great the challenges and dangers that lie in wait for us may be, we will know how to meet and overcome them with courage and intelligence. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to mention the great dangers that surround us today. Only through concerted, responsible action will we be able to overcome the difficult hour that faces humankind.

Today, multilateralism itself is being sorely tested. We are facing one of the most serious and decisive moments in the history of the planet and the human race. At this unprecedented moment, the Organization will have to take serious decisions in order to honour its responsibility to our peoples with concrete results. The Governments of the world need to focus their efforts on raising the level of discussion so that our ambitious contract with humankind and our planet can be fulfiled in time. Not to do so in the face of all the destructive forces that exist on the face of the Earth, and to allow the passions that lead peoples and nations to conflict and war to be unleashed, would be to lose one of the last remaining opportunities for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ouattara (*spoke in French*): Like the Heads of State and Government who have spoken before me, I would like, on behalf of the delegation of Côte D'Ivoire and on my own behalf, to address my sincere congratulations to Mr. Ashe on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I also wish in particular to thank Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon for his leadership of the Organization and his commitment to world peace and development. I take this opportunity to reiterate to him, in the name of my counterparts in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), our gratitude for his personal involvement in the resolution of conflicts in Africa and especially in the subregion of West Africa.

Before touching on the topic of today's debate, in taking the floor for the second time before the Assembly I would like to reaffirm the gratitude of the Ivorian people for the efforts of the United Nations and the international community on our behalf. Indeed, thanks to that invaluable support, Côte d'Ivoire is now hard at work and has returned to the path of economic and social development for the well-being of all Ivorians. My country is in a period of full reconstruction after establishing credible and democratic institutions following free, transparent elections. National reconciliation and political dialogue are under way in a climate of peace. We are aware of the challenges that remain, but we are on the right path.

The theme for this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", calls on us all individually and collectively to consider our capacity to meet the development challenge. As we approach the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it should be noted that significant progress has been achieved by most countries, and we welcome the determination of all Governments to continue their efforts to meet the Millennium commitments.

Although much remains to be done and the progress made can mask various national and regional realities, the current trend appears to be irreversible, despite a particularly difficult economic environment. We must seek to build on the positive outcomes that have been achieved in a number of areas, such as primary school enrolment, vaccinations and slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS. We must also resolve issues of food security, drought, access to drinking water and combating poverty, which continue to be major concerns for our States.

By adopting the Millennium Development Goals, we have the collective responsibility and ambition to improve the living conditions of our fellow citizens and thereby accelerate the development of our countries. As far as my country, Côte d'Ivoire, is concerned, progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, which was deadlocked because of the sociopolitical crisis, has today gained new momentum, thanks to the sound performance of our economy. It is in that favourable climate that the Government has established an ambitious reconstruction programme, which is based on the national development plan for the period 2012-2015. Social investments being a priority in that programme, the programme allocates substantial amounts to education, health and basic social infrastructure. The Government has also made job creation a national priority, in particular jobs for young people, and its goal is to create 200,000 jobs a year, which is a considerable number given the size of our country.

As we assess what has been accomplished, we must face the fact that the world needs greater solidarity to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, we must adopt a comprehensive approach that will enable our countries to create sustainable development models that are more equitable and more respectful of our differences. The African continent, which lags behind in the effort to achieve the Goals by 2015, can nevertheless count on an increasing share in the global economy because of its growth rate. My country therefore supports the definition of a post-2015 agenda to forge a new consensus regarding a new generation of sustainable development goals, based on the Millennium Development Goals.

The world we seek will not come about unless we meet the challenge of peace and security, as well as that of democracy, through a return to the values of the Charter of the United Nations. Too many wars and conflicts continue to tear humankind apart, undermining development efforts in numerous countries. We must collectively put an end to that situation by ensuring that we serve the interests of the people exclusively, using the tools we already have. It is by renewing the foundations of our solidarity that we will be able to counter new threats, such as terrorism, cross-border crime, drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking and piracy at sea.

The attack of a rare violence that occurred in our brother country, Kenya, is an example of those threats, and reminds us of the urgent need for collective action against the threat of terrorism. We condemn in the strongest possible terms that despicable and barbarous act, which shows that the fight against terrorism is ongoing and calls for new methods of security. In these times of great suffering, I would like, on behalf of my country and West Africa, to convey to the brotherly people of Kenya and its President our compassion and support.

International governance must become more democratic and increasingly embody the universal consensus and the values of our nations. Indeed, the world must be able to recognize itself in its multilateral institutions in order to effectively deal with the hazards of this new century.

West Africa is aware of the threat posed to its development, the deterioration in the security environment and the proliferation of new factors of instability. Accordingly, the Heads of State of ECOWAS are rightly doing everything possible, with the support of the international community, in a determined effort to re-establish and maintain peace in our region. For that reason, we welcomed with the utmost satisfaction the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of Mali and the successful holding of presidential elections in that country.

That success must not hide the major challenges still facing our region. I therefore call upon the international community to learn from the conflict in Mali and to support ECOWAS and the African Union in implementing a coherent and proactive security policy. Terrorism in the Sahel region is spreading to such an extent that entire expanses are outside the authority of States. The threat goes beyond the borders of the African continent and demands a concerted international response in keeping with the stakes involved.

I would like to encourage donors and our traditional partners to provide their support to the United Nations and to our States within the framework of this strategy. We welcome the announcement of the upcoming visit of the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank to the Sahel region in order to mobilize the entire international community and the financial institutions.

If we want to end the cycle of politico-military crises in West Africa, Guinea-Bissau must also receive international support, so that we can build upon the current inclusive transition and enable the Government to organize democratic elections next November. For that reason, on behalf of ECOWAS, I call upon the international community to contribute to the financing of general elections in that country.

The President took the Chair.

In closing, I would like to remind our Assembly that in order to meet the challenges of international peace and security, we must redouble our efforts to deliver on the commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits. The right to development must become a reality for all, as set out in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which was unanimously adopted in September 2000. We must all draw lessons from the shortcomings of the past in order to rebuild the world gloriously for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Humala Tasso (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, and to welcome the fact that this lofty responsibility has been entrusted to a dear friend from Antigua and Barbuda, a member of our community of Latin American and Caribbean States. You can count on the firm support of Peru in the execution of your work.

At the outset, I wish to express our respect for and solidarity with the people of Mexico and Pakistan, who are suffering as a result of natural disasters. I also wish to express the strong rejection and condemnation of the Government and people of Peru of the terrorist attack in Nairobi. We are relieved that this horrendous attack has come to an end. We express our unwavering solidarity with the families of the victims and with the Government and people of Kenya at this difficult time.

The world is changing, the agenda is realigning, new actors are emerging and new horizons are coming into view for the future of humankind. All countries and peoples are affected by such rapid transformation. However, we note with concern that some fundamental truths have not changed. Wars continue, mostly in new forms, emerging from the shadows and exacting an ever higher price from innocent populations.

Regarding the Syrian tragedy, we express our solidarity with the Syrian people. Peru condemns the use of chemical weapons as unacceptable in all circumstances. It is an affront to humankind and a clear violation of international law. The Syrian people deserve an immediate solution to the bloody conflict ravaging their country. We therefore urge all parties involved to find a peaceful and negotiated solution that respects the mechanisms for the settlement of disputes. We also call on the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

At the same time, inequality is becoming ever more extreme. The gap marginalizing the poor from the benefits of progress and development widens by the day, robbing them of the rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is crucial for us to strengthen, renew and uphold our global commitment to developing peaceful relations among peoples and to seeking solutions that reject the use of force as means of solving our problems. It is therefore particularly gratifying for Peru and a source of genuine pride that we addressed our maritime delimitation dispute with Chile in the most constructive and cooperative way possible, through a mutual commitment to abiding by and enforcing the judgment to be rendered by the International Court of Justice. This process will, I trust, transform the very nature of our relationship into a profitable and enduring coexistence for the future of our neighbouring peoples.

The rule of law and its principles in the conduct of international affairs are therefore indispensable tools for our conduct as members of the community of peoples of the United Nations. However, the greatest threat to international peace and security falls not in the realm of relations between States, but transcends them and may even use them as tools for shadowy schemes. We are referring to terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, mafias and corruption. All of these crimes pose a genuine threat to life, progress and development, affecting primarily the poorest, which means that such crimes are increasingly becoming the main obstacle to the realization of the goals of the United Nations.

The underlying problems remain the same. Peru therefore welcomes the fundamentally important theme you have chosen, Sir, for our discussions — the development agenda for beyond 2015, which is the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Our country, happily, has made progress and attained some of the best benchmarks for achievement. Since 2000, according to United Nations Development Programme indicators, we achieved certain goals early, in particular in the fight against poverty and extreme poverty, hunger, child mortality, and access to safe drinking water. In 2000, more than half of Peruvians lived in poverty; today, only a quarter of my countrymen still face that situation. Our goal is to reduce those living in poverty to one fifth of our population by the end of my term, in 2016.

We have undertaken to realign the growth model by focusing on inclusion. In those efforts, the State is implementing a number of connected and interdependent policies. It is worth underscoring the unprecedented measure of devoting expenditure to the poorest and most excluded through a range of social programmes aimed at improving the living standards of the population, enhancing education for children and young people and promoting gender equality and access to health services, paying particular attention to those in vulnerable situations.

We are deeply concerned to note that the environment is deteriorating, which is having an impact on our security, in particular that of the most vulnerable. This is happening even as we remain unable to agree on measures to ensure our sustainable development.

The development agenda must also pay particular attention to the empowerment of women and the protection of vulnerable groups. Our Government attaches particular importance to the rights of indigenous peoples. We were the first in the world to legislate and regulate the right to prior consultation on measures directly affecting such groups in accordance with Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization.

We are equally concerned about the rights of migrants and the opportunities for integrated development, to which they contribute, fostering inter-cultural dialogue and economic exchanges between their countries of origin and their host countries. In that vein, we have promoted the free movement of people and welcome the initiative of the Government of Spain to promote visa-free entry for Peruvian nationals into the Schengen Area .

We therefore welcome the commitments contained in the document "The future we want", adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held last year (resolution 66/288, annex). The process proposed at that event to establish sustainable development goals should converge with the post-2015 development agenda, leading to the greater capacity of the Organization to contribute to solving urgent problems and dealing with development challenges.

We urgently need to integrate the various separate efforts. The United Nations should have a single, comprehensive development agenda. But to do so, we need to change the equation and place the fight for equality and against inequality at the centre of our efforts. Let us not make growth an end in itself; rather, we should turn it into a tool. That is why in Peru we believe that the right formula is "inclusion for growth." That is the direction Peru proposes for the post-2015 agenda.

Peru has made a quantum leap in its economy. We are currently among the fastest-growing countries. Responsible management of our economy has helped to create 800,000 new jobs so far during my Administration and has also helped to reduce unemployment by 7 per cent. We are gradually diversifying our economy. Non-traditional exports account for one third of our total exports — more than $11 billion dollars today — and service exports account for $5 billion. We are developing our immense potential for tourism.

The economic growth in recent years has been extraordinary, and I must say it has been the result of much effort, rigour and work, as well as democratic continuity and perseverance. Peru has managed both to avoid the worst effects of global instability and to attract levels of investment flows that are unparalleled in our country's history. Our task is to strengthen the foundations that have enabled such growth, in particular by strengthening democracy, institutions, the rule of law and security, building citizenship and opening spaces for participation.

We have the means to do that, since we are a country of entrepreneurs: 98 per cent of our businesses are small or medium-sized. They employ 75 per cent of the economically active population and contribute 42 per cent of the gross domestic product. Thanks to our efforts, Peru is now considered an emerging, middle-income country, with new middle classes and a growing domestic consumption, and it is able to attract long-term investments for large projects.

Thanks to that and to the extent that we have strengthened our national capacities, we will be able to encourage industrial policies geared towards changing economic and social structures. For us, industrialization is a national goal. In order to move in that direction, in December Lima will host the fifteenth General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Being centrally located on the map of South America and having played a key role in Latin American history, Peru views its region from the perspective of a country that seeks consensus, both internal and external. Peru is a country that perceives regional integration as an effective way to improve the present and future of our security and development. We Peruvians have an overriding conviction that, on our own, we can move forward rapidly, but together we can do that better and reach farther.

Peru is part of the Pacific Alliance, along with Mexico, Chile and Colombia. Together we are moving towards integration with a strategic projection towards the Asia-Pacific region and the world. In that region, which is home to the most dynamic economies of the twenty-first century, we are also part of the Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. We hosted the Leaders' Meeting in 2008 and will host it again in 2016.

We are also a member of the Union of South American Nations, having recently completed our term as pro-tempore president. We participate in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which this year held its first summit with the Heads of State and Government of the European Union. We maintain our hemispheric roots through the Organization of American States, and at the subregional level, we are currently the pro-tempore president of the Andean Community. We consider all those forums to be complementary. We participate in them with a constant call for integration, dialogue and consensus.

Peru is a reliable partner committed to global causes. Our commitment to the values and principles of the General Assembly brings us to point out the need for reform. That is necessary in order to make the United Nations system more legitimate, representative, accountable and effective through the strengthening of its principal organs, specialized agencies and various organizations in the areas of security, development and human rights. Peru shares the position held by a large number of Member States on the need to reform and expand the Security Council so as to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century.

Our aspirations also entail more transparency and accountability on the part of individual economic actors and greater justice in the distribution of wealth. With those objectives in mind, in 2014 Peru will host the thirty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and in 2016 the fourteenth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We thereby hope to contribute so that the Doha Round can be resumed, in the scope of the World Trade Organization, with better prospects.

In many parts of our Latin America and in Peru, republican States were weak from the start, concentrated in the capital city. Their core problem has been therefore that they have been unable to deal with the entire nation and have focused perhaps on one third of the country. It was impossible to build citizenship, since in practice there were different categories of Peruvians: those who received Government services and those who did not.

Our efforts must be directed at the creation of a twenty-first-century State, a State that serves all, not just a few. While this includes an eminently ethical component, its basis is not restricted to that important dimension. It also has profoundly practical repercussions for society at large. We cannot forget that a State that does not serve the entire population breeds and exacerbates inequality. As long as such degrees of inequality exist – and I will never tire of saying this - any policy aimed at combating poverty will have only relative effects.

For that reason, my Administration has worked not only on economic growth but in all areas of growth. The history of my country has seen other periods of growth, but they proved to be unsustainable and benefited very few. Economic growth is a means and not an end; it is an indispensable tool, but it is not sufficient. Our people, especially those who are most forgotten, cannot wait indefinitely for growth without the State actively promoting the extension of its benefits.

In addition, that will set in motion a virtuous circle in which progress for our most vulnerable countrymen and the development of a population free of extreme poverty, with health care and education for all, will create the conditions for even greater economic growth. That is why we stress the new political concept of simultaneous growth and redistribution. That is what I mean when I stress the necessity of "including so as to grow".

Two years ago, less than two months into my term as President of Peru, I stood before the Assembly to emphasize my Government's commitment to social inclusion. I said then that we were working to turn our economic growth into development and quality of life for my countrymen. I also said that we intended to hone our democracy so that it could solve the problems and meet the needs of all. The country we want is a prosperous one where all the Peruvians, women and men, without any distinction, can enjoy the benefits of growth in a dignified, safe and free manner. After two years in office, I reaffirm what I said; our commitment remains the same.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ruak (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to begin by conveying my vigorous condemnation of the recent terrorist attacks in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq, which killed scores of innocent people. On behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste, I extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families in connection with the senseless loss of their loved ones. Terrorism is contrary to every civilized value we hold dear and for which we have fought. It must be condemned in all its manifestations, regardless of its motives.

This is the first time that I am addressing this Assembly of representatives of the international community as a whole. I take this occasion to once again thank the United Nations for its contribution to the realization of the right of the people of Timor-Leste to decide on our own future. Timor-Leste's experience shows the great value of the United Nations and the importance of negotiated solutions, dialogue and diplomacy to international disputes.

This is the first year without a United Nations mission in the country since the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence 11 years ago. Our partnership with the United Nations throughout the last decade achieved remarkable successes. The Timorese people's yearning for stability and peace was decisive for the new circumstances, which allowed the Security Council to remove Timor-Leste from its agenda.

The results obtained are shared jointly by the international community, through their solidarity and pioneering efforts in the nation-building processes made in Timor-Leste, and by the Timorese people, through their maturity and firm determination to live in peace, which has been repeatedly expressed in free elections with a high voter turnout.

I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the attention given to my country, which was again underlined by his visit to Timor-Leste one year ago, which greatly honoured us.

The Timorese people now hold in their own hands full responsibility for building their future. The country is facing the challenges with high hopes and optimism.

One such challenge is to focus national development efforts on diversifying the economy, reducing our dependency on oil and promoting inclusive development for all Timorese people. Another is to consolidate our national institutions, strengthening their technical capacities and ensuring the participation of the younger generation in managing the country.

The older generations have incumbency and have the duty to pass on to young people the wealth of values developed during the liberation struggle, such as respect for human dignity and dedication and service to the country. Those values are as necessary to building an equitable society and a unified country today as they were in the past to solidifying the unity of purpose of the nation. The development of the country must not exclude any Timorese.

The relations between Timor-Leste and the United Nations will continue to strengthen and will increasingly focus on assistance in the area of human, social and economic development efforts and the strengthening of institutions.

The international integration of the country continues to evolve at a good pace, guided by the goal of contributing to a peaceful and stable international system capable of promoting social and human opportunities for all peoples. We are participating actively in the development of new forms of dialogue among fragile States by establishing the Group of Seven Plus (g7+). That group, over which Timor-Leste currently has the honour of presiding, comprises 18 countries committed to promoting a new model of engagement between fragile States and other international stakeholders. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, promoted by the g7+, has been well received by the United Nations, development partners and international organizations. The initiatives of the g7+ and the dynamic relationship of the group with development partners contributes to the establishment of more innovative and effective international relations and cooperation.

The latest report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) states that most countries will not achieve all the MDGs, and that is particularly true in the case of fragile and conflict-affected States. The international community as a whole must draw lessons from that as we plan for the future. Many of the world's poorest have been left behind, including around 1.5 billion people across the globe who live in areas affected by fragility and conflict. That is why the g7+ countries came together with the following vital message: without peace there can be no development and without development there can be no peace. And to add a further dimension to that, there can be neither peace nor development without inclusive and responsive State institutions that are capable of being responsive and attending to people's needs.

At the regional level, we have established friendly relations with neighbouring countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific, in particular with Australia and Indonesia, our closest neighbours, with whom we maintain intense cooperation. The process of reconciliation between Timor-Leste and Indonesia and the excellent relations that our two countries have developed represent a model whose lessons are useful and relevant beyond our borders and outside our region.

Timor-Leste has submitted its application for membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We have developed friendly relations with all member States of that organization, which makes relevant contributions to stability in our region. Our country is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and a special observer at the Pacific Islands Forum. We play an active role in and are committed to multilateral processes, which are important for regional stability and security.

The unanimous election of Timor-Leste to chair the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific by the countries members of that United Nations body reflects my country's harmonious international integration. As a member of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, we will have the honour of chairing that organization in the period 2014-2016. Timor-Leste believes in making its voice directly heard in every multilateral forum of relevance to our national interest and will submit an application for membership in the Commonwealth of Nations.

Turning our attention to international matters whose urgency especially appeals to our conscience, my country has witnessed with horror the growing violence in Syria. We welcome the agreement that was reached to put Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons under United Nations control prior to its destruction. Timor-Leste rejects the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances. We are in favour of dialogue in the search for negotiated solutions, with the involvement of the United Nations. Only negotiation can help save lives and alleviate the high toll that the Syrian people are paying in human lives and social upheaval, which has resulted in millions of internally displaced persons and refugees.

In Timor-Leste, we know only too well the losses and traumas of war. We are committed to preventing violence in all its forms. Earlier this month, our Prime Minister, Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, joined the Champions initiative to end sexual violence in conflict, supporting the corresponding action launched by the United Nations.

In a world undergoing a rapid transition towards globalization, the Security Council must upgrade its ability to effectively respond and must adjust its composition to better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. New Powers, including India, Indonesia and Brazil, among others, must be granted permanent member status in the Security Council. At the same time, my country is aware of the need for a better representation of medium-sized and small countries with relevant contributions to stability and peace. In that spirit, Timor-Leste supports New Zealand's candidacy for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for the 2015-2016 term. New Zealand has actively worked with us for peace and security in Timor-Leste, and we believe it will both enhance the representation of small States and be a constructive bridge-builder at the Council.

On 30 August, Timor-Leste celebrated the fourteenth anniversary of the referendum supervised by the United Nations that allowed the Timorese people to realize their right to self-determination and independence. In contrast, there are peoples who, after decades, continue to patiently wait for the realization of that right. Such is the case of the Sahrawi people. A stable and lasting solution for Western Sahara cannot exist without the democratic expression of the will of its people.

We commend the decision of the leaders of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume direct talks under the auspices of the United States Government. Timor-Leste supports the right of the peoples of Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace, with dignity and in safety. We hope that the peace talks already initiated may at last lead to a solution with two sovereign States coexisting in an environment of mutual respect and rejecting extremism and violence. We condemn the building of settlements in the occupied territories and all unilateral initiatives contrary to resolutions of the United Nations.

We believe in dialogue, openness and inclusion as a means of strengthening confidence in international relations. Therefore, we call for an end to the embargo against the Republic of Cuba, an embargo that does not take into account the reality of today, of the country or of the Cuban people. We also call on President Barack Obama to act in accordance with his powers and release the four Cuban citizens, from an initial group of five, who have been incarcerated for over a decade in North American prisons.

Allow me now to address the situation in Guinea-Bissau, a sister nation to Timor-Leste in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries currently experiencing an easing of political and social tensions, which we hope will lead to the re-establishment of institutional normalcy and democracy. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, which were led by my predecessor as Head of State of Timor-Leste, Mr. José Manuel Ramos-Horta. His initiatives have helped to enhance the prestige of the United Nations among the people of Guinea-Bissau and to create an environment of greater trust and dialogue in the country. The problems of Guinea-Bissau can be solved. Timor-Leste will continue to support the patient efforts of the Guinean people and the international community aimed at intensifying dialogue and reconciliation among the people of Guinea-Bissau and promoting a democratic solution within an appropriate time frame.

Among the critical global challenges facing humankind today, I want to highlight the severity of malnutrition, which affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide. The dual challenges of improving food security and reducing malnutrition on a global scale require a renewed boost from all of us, including development partner countries. Without new coordinated initiatives and greater investment to promote improving food security and the fight against malnutrition, it will not be possible to make rapid and sure progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The new objectives are defined in the post-2015 development agenda, due to be launched by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Timor-Leste is following, with great interest, the post-2015 development agenda process and was honoured by the invitation to Dr. Emilia Pires, our Minister of Finance, to participate in the High-level Panel that drafted a proposal for the agenda, following a request by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The past experience of the Timorese people and the country's liberation struggle, in which we were engaged for 24 years, have demonstrated that only tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect, which the Timorese resistance consistently showed and I have consistently supported — in short, veneration for the dignity of people — will allow us to reach durable solutions to disputes between countries.

In a world where challenges are rapidly becoming globalized, requiring concerted and effective responses, the actions of the United Nations are more than ever essential for the stability of international relations. Timor-Leste will continue to show its commitment to the United Nations, so that the Organization may better respond to the desires of Member States and the challenges they face, and to unhesitatingly assert the values of peace and mutual respect. I wish the Assembly the best of luck in its work.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His

Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Senegalese delegation, I would like to wish you, Sir, all the best as President at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

By focusing its debate on the post-2015 development agenda, the General Assembly reminds us that there is not much time left before attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is finally evaluated. Despite progress after more than a decade of implementing the MDGs, the magnitude of the challenges is still overwhelming. In terms of access to food, housing, education and healthcare, the daily lives of nearly one billion people have barely improved. Women continue to die in childbirth. Inequalities persist within and between countries. The economic crisis continues and environmental degradation is worsening. We need to take concrete and resolute actions to transform our collective ambitions into reality.

In the quest for sustainable development, a conference on climate change in 2015 in Paris will provides us with another opportunity to pull ourselves together, by reversing the negative effects of climate change on Earth, our common habitat.

Addressing the challenges of sustainable development and building the future we want, in the spirit of the Rio+20 Conference, require a more sustained effort than the fight against poverty. We should invest more in education, as the Global Partnership for Education expects of us. We need to modernize agriculture, make electricity accessible to everybody and develop infrastructure to foster trade and investment. These are the pillars that underpin growth and prosperity. It is precisely this vision that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seeks to promote through its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

As part of that programme, 51 priority projects have been identified and established throughout the continent. Overall, they will cost $68 billion between 2012 and 2020. As Chairperson of NEPAD's Orientation Committee, I am pleased with the consensus that our partners have built around PIDA, namely, the Group of Twenty and the Group of Eight (G-8) and with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

I also welcome the very strong signal which the G-8, meeting in June in Lough Erne, sent concerning the need for a concerted campaign against tax evasion and other fraudulent practices affecting our economies. We must now push ahead and launch the mechanisms we have agreed on for improving transparency in international transactions, including the mining industry. This is the best way to support Africa's efforts to mobilize domestic resources in order to finance its development.

Similarly, Senegal calls for the reform of international economic and financial governance, notably the terms for accessing credit and obtaining financing for economic and social development projects. Let us not pave the road to the future with the instruments of the past. While plummeting official development assistance no longer meets Africa's needs, the trend towards progress should lead us to explore other innovative financing mechanisms available to our countries. Africa is no longer a zone of turmoil and humanitarian emergencies. Africa has become an emerging centre of opportunities and investments for innovative and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Mr. Maelanga (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The world has changed; Africa has also changed. Let us therefore change our paradigms and visions; let us change the way we look at the continent.

Change is also needed for the reform of the Security Council. The Council's legitimacy is not derived only from its status as the guarantor of the collective security system; it is also and especially derived from the representativeness that justifies its action in the name of and on behalf of all Member States.

This time last year, Mali was doubly affected by a coup and a terrorist attack reminiscent of a bygone age. They were a source of great concern for us. Senegal, which remains active within United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, welcomes the restoration of the territorial integrity and constitutional legality of Mali. We congratulate the people of Mali and their political leaders for that happy outcome. We strongly support the national reconciliation efforts being made by the Government in the spirit of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

Today, while the armed groups have been defeated, the terrorist threat to the Sahel has not yet been definitively ended. It is only through ongoing, coordinated and sufficiently deterrent action that we will be able to address the emerging security challenges on the African continent. It is urgent to make operational the African rapid response force, proposed at the last African Union summit.

In Guinea-Bissau, Senegal is supporting the Government's efforts to successfully carry out the electoral process. We urge our partner countries and institutions to pursue their support for the definitive resolution of the Guinea-Bissau crisis through the country's economic recovery, the crucial reform of the defence and security sector, and the fight against illicit drug trafficking. We hope that similar attention will be paid to the Central African Republic and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the legitimate aspiration to peace, stability and the preservation of territorial integrity. Throughout Africa, we are committed to upholding respect for the African Union principles against anti-constitutional changes of Government, regardless of the process used.

In regard to the Middle East, Senegal expresses its deep concern over the untold suffering of the Syrian population. We urge the Syrian Government to exercise restraint and to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention in the control and destruction of its arsenal of chemical weapons.

In its capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Senegal is following the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. It is a courageous and responsible act because it translates the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore call for a halt to acts likely to affect that perspective, notably the ongoing establishment of settlements on Palestinian land by the Israeli Government.

On 24 September, Senegal joined other countries in launching the international campaign for the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. Sexual violence in conflict is an act of unbearable cruelty for the victims and their families. It is a war crime and a serious violation of human dignity and universal conscience. In the name of our common humanity, it is time to act to prevent and stop such horrors. It is time to act so that victims will no longer feel alone in their suffering, which destroys the very foundations of society. It is time to act so that the perpetrators and their accomplices in those crimes are tracked down everywhere, prosecuted and punished in a manner commensurate with the atrocities of their crimes.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): When the nations of the world come together in the General Assembly to consider the major issues facing humankind, it is an honour and a privilege to take the floor and to express the viewpoint of one's country. Animated by those twin sentiments, on behalf of the Congolese people I address the Assembly and through it the community of nations as a whole.

At the outset, I wish to express my most sincere congratulations to Mr. John Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at the sixty-eighth session. I also congratulate the members of his Bureau. I further wish to hail his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for the outststanding way in which he fulfilled his term as President. I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for all his initiatives for peace and security throughout the world and for his personal involvement in seeking ways and means to bring peace and stability to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire Great Lakes region. His efforts are all the more commendable given the fact that the enemies of peace are always on the lookout, ready to strike anyone, anytime and anywhere, as we have unfortunately been recently reminded by the terrorist attack that brought such tragedy to the Republic of Kenya. On behalf of the Congolese Government and people and on my own behalf. I condemn that despicable act. We express our condolences and solidarity with the brotherly people and leaders of Kenya.

We welcome the President's choice of theme for this general debate, namely, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". He mentioned the equally relevant need to draw lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, consider new and emerging development challenges, create measurable indicators, establish new types of partnership and better integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The importance of the theme chosen and the relevance of the indicators that accompany it are undeniable. Our thinking must be even more rigorous, as we witness several troubling elements in the international environment.

With respect to organizing for the post-2015 period, the international community is increasingly witnessing non-compliance on the part of certain Members with the basic principles of international relations, persistent selfishness on the part of States and convulsions in the global economy. The consequences are manifold. They range from threats to peace to deadly conflicts and from globalization driven mainly by the unbridled pursuit of profit to the aggravation of poverty. That comes in addition to the food crisis, famines, diseases — including endemic diseases that had once disappeared and are now reappearing — and environmental destruction, which is the main cause of climate change and its deplorable effects.

To remedy the situation, the General Assembly has established several bodies, and I welcome their creation: the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing and the high-level political forum to promote the implementation of recommendations and decisions on sustainable development. My hope is that that process will be consistent with the ongoing transformation of the Economic and Social Council and, beyond that, of the entire United Nations system, in order to better integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the economic, social and environmental dimensions, in the new post-2015 agenda.

The new programme that we are called upon to create must be universal, ambitious and able to meet the huge challenges facing humankind. It must bring about positive change, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In that respect, it is important to utilize the contribution of women, youth and civil society in both the design and the execution of the agenda. We should also draw lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to climate change as an important issue to resolve in the post-2015 period, allow me to recall that, under the final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288), States pledged to abandon unsustainable long-term patterns of consumption and adopt sustainable ways of managing natural resources as the basis for economic and social development and the very future of humankind. Climate change is a threat to humankind and fundamental human rights, particularly for vulnerable populations and especially those from the African continent and island countries. Seeking to limit its impact is, for each of our countries, a responsibility that we must shoulder as a duty towards our people, a service to the human race and an act of international solidarity.

Recognizing that fact, the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country of exceptional biodiversity, has always sought to manage its natural resources with a view to the future. The management policy for of our forest ecosystems is aimed at that. The Grand Inga project has also been designed along those lines. We should emphasize, in fact, that that project should eventually enable us to produce enough electricity to meet the energy needs of nearly half of Africa. It will also be clean and renewable energy, consistent with the requirements of sustainable development.

Today we must begin to set the stage for the post-2015 period. In that context, I express the hope that proposals will be made during this session to translate into reality our common desire to promote the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Such proposals should cover our local, national and regional development programmes. They should also encourage bold international cooperation and reflect the will of each of our States to contribute to international peace and security.

Without peace, no progress is possible. Without the minimum conditions for the safety of persons and property, all development is hypothetical. That is all the more unacceptable since a breach of the peace is the result of aggression. That is the sad recent history of my country.

It is also important to remember other parallel truths that are often overlooked or hidden. Because we acted in solidarity by welcoming Rwandan refugees to our territory, the Congolese population in the eastern part of the country has been deprived of peace — a fundamental right of all persons — and they continue to count their dead. The most recent episode of the unending tragedy occurred when bombs crushed the women and children of Goma last July. It was truly a tragedy unequalled in history and which cannot leave any heart untouched. It is time to ask ourselves what will remain of international humanitarian law if welcoming refugees in distress, which is a humanitarian act par excellence, becomes sufficient reason to justify the eruption of war.

The recent bombing of Goma was all the more reprehensible as it was perpetrated while the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was in the process of implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework of Addis Ababa, including talks with the armed group responsible for the bombings. Nevertheless, I wish to reaffirm my country's determination to comply with all of the commitments contained in the Framework agreement.

From that perspective, my Government has already undertaken the following definitive actions: the establishment of the National Follow-up Mechanism to implement the commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the acceleration of security sector reform, especially the army, police and justice sectors; further progress in decentralization, by adopting the necessary implementation laws; the reform of public finance management; and the restructuring of the Independent National Election Commission. This last was immediately implemented in order to prioritize the organization of local, municipal, provincial, senatorial and provincial governor elections. A national dialogue has been organized, starting on 7 September, with the goal of seeking national cohesion to better respond to all of the challenges facing the country.

Beyond those efforts on the part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the dawn of sustainable peace in the region depends on two main conditions — ending impunity in all its aspects, and the diligent execution of their commitments by the other signatories of the Framework agreement. Therefore, my country again urgently appeals to the Organization to deal with all Member States with equal rigour and to require that each one strictly respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is clear that denouncing violations of those principles is a good thing, but punishing those who violate the principles is preferable by far, especially when those violations are ongoing and recurrent.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my thanks to the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the European Union for their essential role in maintaining peace in our region. I also thank the United Nations, in particular the members of the Security Council, and all of those States that have, for many years, remained at our side in order to ensure peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are all the more thankful to them, as they have participated in one of the breakthroughs of the post-2015 development agenda aimed at ensuring a better world for all.

We must be convinced that beyond our differences lies a common future. Our diversity must be seen as the essential source of wealth that it is. It is high time that we, the international community, find the ways and means to enable millions of people to not simply live, but to live a life of dignity in a world where peace, security and justice are a reality for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (*spoke in French*): It is often said that things always come in threes. Indeed, this is the third time that I have had the privilege to address the Assembly as President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar. Here we are again, convening as we do every year for the General Assembly. All the leaders of the planet meet regularly to debate, exchange views and share their experiences within the framework of a process of consultations that belongs to a long collective march towards peace, security and sustainable planetary development. But each year, new, ever more violent and more lethal conflicts are waged, requiring that we respond with equal intensity. Shall we limit ourselves to simply speaking about conflict resolution, or shall we to challenge ourselves, analyse the underlying causes and take the necessary measures to preserve stability in the world?

As I add my voice to those who have spoken before me, I warmly congratulate the President on the votes that he won in support of his candidacy. Madagascar will endeavour to provide him its sincere support and cooperation.

Regrettably, over recent decades, when we speak of Africa, we generally see States that are exposed to permanent violence and the progressive loss of democracy, States where wars, conflicts and crises continually break out and there is more division than consensus. According to Ambassador Jeremić, who presided at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, humankind is facing an existential crisis, with symptoms such as economic instability, social inequalities and environmental degradation.

For my part, I would add that humankind may be losing its forward momentum but that it is not giving up. Yes, the news delivered by the media every day is extremely worrying throughout the world. Whether the country is developed, emerging or poor, no segment of society escapes deterioration of various kinds, including poor employment conditions, unemployment, declining purchasing power, the total absence of any income at all, lack of access to basic necessities in food, clothing, health care and education, and, in addition, poverty, deprivation and indigence. Those are all factors that are the nurturing ground for intolerance, confrontation and conflict, thereby helping to give rise to global insecurity. I refer here particularly to recent events in Kenya, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria, to name just a few. We fully share in the pain and sorrow of the families of the victims.

Some 800 days from the deadline of 2015, like most African States and many developing countries, Madagascar is finding it difficult to attain all the Millennium Development Goals, despite the efforts everyone has made. Given that situation, I have to wonder what sort of contribution we, the leaders of our nations, can make individually to that collective effort, with a view to finding ways of improving the daily lives of those who have put their trust in us and placed their destiny in our hands.

In his statement yesterday (see A/68/PV.5), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the fact that, in streets and squares across the world, people are pressing those in power. They want world leaders to listen. They want to know that we are doing everything we can to secure a life of dignity for all. The popular unrest in the context of the Arab Spring and the movements of the outraged exemplify this observation and reflect a legitimate aspiration. I fully support the Secretary-General's remarks and call upon all of us to ensure that we clearly understand the demands of the demonstrators.

Madagascar would also have wished to benefit from such understanding when the Malagasy people rose up against an unpopular regime to demand a better life through the establishment of genuine change. But that was not the case. On the contrary, Madagascar encountered misunderstanding and the inflexibility of an international community operating at various speeds, not to mention the application of dogmatic texts, even though popular uprisings elsewhere, in very similar circumstances, had been viewed sympathetically and with concern.

Efforts must therefore now be made to end the unequal treatment of countries in crisis. We must become aware of popular aspirations and realities on the ground so as not to take the wrong decision. If it is valid elsewhere, surely it is also valid in the case of Madagascar?

All the conditions were in place in Madagascar. The danger of a social explosion and a fratricidal conflict was omnipresent, but fortunately — unlike some countries that continue to experience unrest and even armed violence, and despite all the economic and social restrictions and the absence of support and assistance from the international community from which Madagascar has suffered in recent years — the people of Madagascar did not fall into the trap of internal conflict, which some would have taken advantage of.

It is with great national pride that I announce from this rostrum that Madagascar was able to avoid civil war. That required considerable sacrifice, self-denial and humility, but we came through thanks to our patriotism. I reiterate the fact that despite our disagreements and our different points of view, we have reached a settlement of our conflict using all available negotiation methods. I would like to solemnly thank the Malagasy people, who are a peaceful people and aspire to peace and whose courage and patience have been unmatched in the peaceful settlement of our political crisis.

The Malagasy people deserve a better future. Citizens will be able to freely express their choices on their future leader through the ballot box at the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled to take place on 25 October this year, for which the electoral campaign began yesterday.

Madagascar is now starting a new phase in its history. I would like to warmly thank all those who, throughout the process of Madagascar's emergence from its crisis, supported and assisted us during the transition period, in particular, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the various presidents of the SADC Troika, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the International Organization of la Francophonie, and all friendly countries without exception, without forgetting those who have already demonstrated their willingness to provide international observers for the elections. At the same time, I would like to renew my appeal to the entire General Assembly to join the ranks of our partners.

We are at a crossroads. The people expect specific and tangible results. The question is, do we have the courage and the wisdom to sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of our people and to avoid conflict and civil war, so that innocent people do not lose their lives, so that those who are in power no longer use weapons and so that no one resorts to violence?

As a leader, I realize that the exercise of power requires an awareness of our humanity and our fallibility. That is the message that Madagascar would like convey as its contribution to this general debate today. The world is changing very quickly, a new generation is rising to replace the old one, and leaders have the duty to meet the expectations of our people and to find a solution to ensure their well-being.

In my case, I did everything I could to overcome the political crisis in Madagascar and maintain national unity and the best interests of the Malagasy people. I also decided that I will not be a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. It is on that note, and with the well-known words of American theologian and writer James Freeman Clarke, that I would like to conclude: "A politician thinks of the next election. A statesman, of the next generation."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Campaoré (*spoke in French*): Sociopolitical crises, armed conflicts, the degradation of ecosystems, pandemics like HIV/AIDS, religious extremism, terrorism, cross-border crime and development problems are today the vital questions that call upon the conscience of individuals, summoning their responsibility for building the present and the future. I am convinced of the need to enhance our spirit of sharing and solidarity in order to meet the challenges of promoting peace, stability and security and to provide humankind with all the tools needed for better mastery of its evolution.

Before continuing, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. In addition, I would like to express our recognition for the remarkable way in which his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, presided over the work of the sixty-seventh session. Allow me also to repeat to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban

Ki-moon, the expression of the esteem and recognition of the Government of Burkina Faso for his availability and staunch commitment to peace and development.

The current session is taking place in an international context characterized by relentless economic difficulties and growing threats to peace and security on a global scale. I take this opportunity to express to the people of Kenya the compassion and solidarity of the people of Burkina Faso following the terrorist attacks that were recently perpetrated in Nairobi.

The West African subregion continues to be marked by the stigma of multidimensional crises that have taken place over the past two decades. Our subregion, and particularly the Sahelo-Saharan zone, has became a hideout for drug traffickers and terrorists whose desire to destabilize the region represents a real threat to the peace and security of our States.

I would like to welcome the gradual improvement of the situation in Mali since the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the holding of presidential elections, which supports the re-established constitutional order. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate my thanks to all those players who have helped to resolve the crisis in Mali. To the Malian authorities and people, I express my warmest congratulations on the success of the recent presidential elections. The implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will contribute, I am convinced, to enhancing stability in that country and in the entire Sahelo-Saharan region. Burkina Faso is determined to play a role alongside the international community to achieve the objectives of that strategy.

Dialogue is the favoured way to ensure understanding among and within peoples. Furthermore, the Government of Burkina Faso supports strengthening social cohesion, broadening spaces for freedom and dialogue, and seeking together solutions to conflicts. It is in that spirit that my country has been participating for two decades in peacekeeping operations conducted by the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, with contingents of about 2,000 men and women who are deployed in various theatres of operation. I pay tribute to the efforts of all those who work tirelessly to build a world of peace and freedom.

Beyond the resolution of sociopolitical and military crises in West Africa, Burkina Faso strongly supports the initiatives of the international community that seek to restore lasting stability in the Central African Republic, the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region, Somalia and the Sudan.

With regard to Western Sahara, my country supports the search for a political solution acceptable to all parties and reaffirms its support to the Moroccan initiative for an autonomous status for the Saharan region as a credible and realistic alternative in resolving that dispute.

Beyond the African continent, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic urgently requires an immediate end to the hostilities and a search for political solutions to the crisis. Therefore we encourage the implementation of the American-Russian agreement of 14 September aimed at control and dismantlement of chemical weapons stockpiles.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, we welcome the relaunching of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine and strongly encourage the different parties to work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in order to reach a fair and equitable solution based on the recognition of a Palestinian State living in perfect harmony with Israel.

The climate of dialogue and détente that characterizes relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China should be welcomed and encouraged. In that spirit, we must welcome the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations specialized agencies, particularly the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We also welcome Taiwan's incalculable contribution in support of the achievement by developing countries such as Burkina Faso of the Millennium Development Goals.

Peace in Africa requires pertinant socioeconomic development programmes to generate effective responses to the uncertainties created by the international economic situation and to strengthen trust between the people and the leaders. A landlocked country of the Sahel without great natural resources, Burkina Faso is committed to implementing strong policies in the context of its Strategy of Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development, with a view to promoting development and to significantly improving in the quality of life of the people of Burkina Faso.

As we approach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the theme of the current session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", raises in a pertinant way the issue of the dialectical relationship between development, peace and security. It therefore offers us an opportunity to focus our thinking on a new vision in order to achieve comprehensive progress, based on strong international solidarity, towards sustainable development. That is why it is important that we redouble our efforts to regulate environmental issues on the basis of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.

Peace and stability appear as still-distant goals, given the number of centres of conflict throughout the world. That situation demands that we further strengthen multilateralism, rigorously apply the principles enshrined in the Charter of our Organization, strengthen the instruments for promoting those ideals and carry out the reform of United Nations bodies, in particular the Security Council. It is my hope that the General Assembly's work at this session will contribute to achieving those noble objectives for a more fulfilled and united humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dessalegn (Ethiopia): It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the President on his election to his high office to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, which is being held under the theme: "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". I wish to assure the President of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the successful discharge of his heavy responsibilities. I would also like to commend his predecessor for the able leadership he demonstrated during the previous session.

Let me begin by condemning the terrorist attacks in Kenya that claimed the lives of innocent civilians and left many more injured. I wish to express my heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Kenya, as well as to the families of the victims of that callous attack. That incident once again demonstrates the need for us to renew our commitment to fight terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

I am addressing the Assembly today not only on behalf of my country but also as the representative of the African Union (AU), which Ethiopia has the honour of chairing this year. It is a welcome coincidence that Ethiopia, which played host to the founding Conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), 50 years ago, has assumed the rotating chairpersonship of that premier continental organization at a time when its golden jubilee is being celebrated. We were very pleased to host the Special Summit of African Heads of State and Government, which marked the OAU/AU jubilee on 25 May, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who sent delegations to Addis Ababa to take part in the celebration and conveyed messages of support and solidarity to the African Union. Since the fiftieth anniversary will be a year-long event, we would like to continue to mark the historic milestone during this session of the General Assembly by reflecting on the relations between the United Nations and the then Organization of African Union and today's African Union over the past half-century.

When the Charter of the United Nations was signed in 1945, much of Africa was under the yoke of colonialism. Since then, our continent has been liberated from the remnants of colonialism and other forms of subjugation. Today, it is gratifying to note that African countries constitute one of the largest groups in the General Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound appreciation for the invaluable contribution of the United Nations to the decolonization process. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that not all the challenges we faced in that struggle have been definitively settled; nor can we say that the process of decolonization has come to an end in all its forms. We should therefore renew our commitment to completing the decolonization process in Africa.

In accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, the United Nations has indeed worked closely with the African Union and other regional mechanisms to advance its primary objectives. Over the past five decades and more, cooperation and partnership between the OAU/AU and the United Nations have significantly expanded and deepened in a wide range of aspects and fields. We acknowledge with deep respect the meaningful cooperation that the United Nations has provided to the then OAU and now to the African Union in addressing our continent's multifaceted challenges.

Despite that fact, we are also cognizant of the fact that a lot remains to be done to further enhance the cooperation and partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of the changing dynamics within Africa and in the world at large. I earnestly hope that this historic occasion will afford us a unique opportunity to reflect seriously on our challenges and shortcomings with a view to strengthening our cooperation and partnership so as to better respond to the changing environment. I believe we should adopt a flexible and innovative approach in implementing Chapter VIII of the Charter in order to enhance our partnership and address our common challenges.

We are celebrating the OAU/AU's golden jubilee at a time when the stereotypical narrative of Africa as a continent afflicted by poverty, disease and conflict has slowly begun to change. In spite of so many persistent difficulties, Africa has indeed turned the corner in reducing the number of conflicts plaguing the continent and in promoting democratic governance, as well as in fighting poverty through accelerated economic growth and development. With its enhanced peace and stability, rapid economic growth, natural resources and growing middle class, Africa is definitely on the rise, and that is attracting much attention from the rest of the world. The twenty-first century will be an African one if we do indeed harmonize our efforts to maintain — in fact, speed up — the rapid economic growth that Africa has been registering for the last decade or so. We have every reason to be optimistic that an African renaissance is around the corner.

That positive development is unquestionably encouraging, but we recognize that we can achieve our aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa only by bringing about structural transformation. That is why we are capitalizing on the golden jubilee celebration to chart a transformation agenda for Africa to be implemented over the next 50 years. At our most recent session, in May, we also adopted our AU Commission's strategic plan for the period 2014-2017, whose main objective is to lay a solid foundation for the realization of our vision in the short and medium term.

It is indeed opportune that we are crafting our transformation agenda when intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 global development framework have begun in earnest. I am glad that the Assembly will debate that issue at this session, and I commend the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, co-chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, for presenting their comprehensive report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, to the Secretary-General. I hope that the report will provide valuable input for our discussions of the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" during this session.

Africa considers this issue to be of paramount importance and has formed a high-level committee of Heads of State and Government to develop a common position and galvanize international support in order to ensure that the successes achieved thus far in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals are sustained and its development priorities beyond 2015 are fully taken on board. As the able Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has aptly put it, what Africa needs is structural transformation, not structural adjustment. The development agenda we are trying to set for Africa over the next 50 years is also aimed at achieving that fundamental objective, with a view to eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. With respect to the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, we intend to come up with a well-thought-out African position as an outcome of the initiative of our troika: the African Union Commission, UNECA and the African Development Bank.

In that context, we want to achieve a green revolution in Africa and ensure food security for our peoples. The theme of the African Union in 2014 will be "Agriculture and food security" and will promote the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, which will allow us to reinforce our commitment to the transformation of the agricultural sector in Africa.

We are also convinced of the need for Africa to industrialize in order to accelerate its economic growth, generate employment, increase income and diversify exports. That can be done on the basis of our factor endowments and taking into account the need for us to increase added value and exploit forward and backward linkages. It cannot be emphasized enough that overcoming poverty is impossible without structural transformation and value addition, which makes industrialization not an option but a must — an unavoidable necessity for Africa. Let me state here how grateful we are to all those who have made partnerships available to us to ensure that Africa develops the capacity for modern and affordable energy, without which industrialization would be impossible to achieve.

Furthermore, we would like to invest in infrastructure, which has been neglected over past decades, in order to promote intra-African trade and fast-track regional integration. We are also committed to redoubling our efforts to improve the overall well-being of our society. In particular, we believe that Africa should reap the benefits of its demographic dividend by investing in its people. Educating our youth and upgrading their skills is critical to the effective use of our human capital. Therefore we very much hope that the post-2015 global development framework will be aligned to our development priorities and needs.

We in Africa certainly recognize that we cannot realize our development aspirations in the absence of durable peace and security. That is why we have concentrated tremendous efforts in addressing the scourge of conflicts on our continent. We are indeed very pleased to note the drastic decline in the number of conflicts in Africa during the last decade, with the exception of a few situations. But we also understand that there is a new security dynamic on our continent, with the rise of popular dissatisfaction associated with demands yet unmet.

In that regard, the African Union has been exerting efforts to assist Egypt — a member State whose contribution to the decolonization process on our continent and to African unity has been second to none — to overcome its current difficulties in the spirit of African solidarity. The African Union is also extending all the necessary support to Tunisia in order to ensure a successful political transition through the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of elections.

On the other hand, we welcome the successful conduct of elections in Mali that paved the way for the restoration of constitutional order in that country. The African Union is indeed firmly committed to continue assisting Mali in its efforts to ensure lasting peace, security and development. We derive satisfaction from the significant progress made in Somalia towards peace in the country, and we are also encouraged by the agreement reached between the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Juba Interim Administration, which constitutes a significant milestone in promoting peace and national reconciliation. The New Deal announced at the Somalia Conference in Brussels on 16 September will certainly strengthen the momentum for the reconstruction of the country and building peace there.

The security and humanitarian situation in Central African Republic is still a matter of serious concern. I wish to reiterate our call to the United Nations to provide multifaceted support to the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, which will be deployed in that country to protect civilians and restore security and public order. On the other hand, the escalation of tension in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo also poses threats to the peace and security of the Great Lakes region and the continent as a whole. The only durable solution is for both the Government and the armed opposition to conclude their peace talks under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). In that connection, I would like to welcome the outcome of the ICGLR Extraordinary Summit held in Kampala on 5 September 2013 and High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York on 23 September in New York under the auspices of the President of the Assembly.

With regard to relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, the African Union, in close collaboration with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, has established an ad hoc investigation mechanism to verify allegations made by the two countries regarding each country's support for and harbouring of dissident elements that act against the other. The team is carrying out its work, and I am hopeful that the outcome of the investigation will help the two countries to move forward in the implementation of the agreements they have signed and in the normalization of their relations. On a more practical level, the summits and the regular engagement that the leaders of the two countries are having will go a long way in breaking the impasse and resolving some of the difficult outstanding issues.

I would like to raise one important issue that has been a matter of serious concern for us in our efforts to promote peace, security and national reconciliation on the continent and regarding which there is a strong consensus in Africa. Time and again, we in Africa have affirmed our unflinching commitment to fighting impunity and promoting democracy, rule of law and good governance throughout the continent, in conformity with the Constitutive Act of the African Union. That commitment has been empirically validated by bold actions taken recently by the African Union.

When it comes to the International Criminal Court (ICC), many of our member States ratified the Rome Statute faithfully, subscribing to its cardinal objectives and principles. Unfortunately, the manner in which the ICC has been operating has left a very bad impression in Africa. Instead of promoting justice and reconciliation and contributing to peace and stability, it has degenerated into a political instrument targeting Africa and Africans. This is totally unacceptable, and that is why Africa has been expressing its serious reservations against the body.

It is regrettable that our repeated request to the United Nations Security Council to defer the proceedings initiated against President Al-Bashir has been neither heard nor acted upon. We have also received no response to our request for a deferral of the ICC investigations and prosecutions in relation to the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, in line with the principle of complementarity, to allow for a national mechanism to investigate and prosecute the cases under a reformed judiciary provided for in the new constitutional dispensation.

In light of the encouraging developments in Kenya with the adoption of the new Constitution, the reform of the judiciary and the holding of successful legislative and presidential elections, we believe it is very critical to support the peacebuilding and national reconciliation processes in the country. The recent decision of the ICC in relation to the Kenyan situation is unhelpful and adversely affects the ability of the Kenyan leaders in the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to once again urge the Security Council to respond to our requests.

In an increasingly globalized and multipolar world, Africa obviously needs to forge multiple partnerships to realize its development aspirations and assume its rightful place in the international arena. It gives me great satisfaction to note that Africa's strategic partnership with both developed and emerging economies has expanded and deepened in recent years. That is the path we wish to pursue. Africa needs the solidarity of all sections of the international community, and it is our hope that all the necessary support will be extended to Africa in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which underlined so emphatically the special situation of Africa. That, in our view, should be the spirit with which the deficit in the implementation of Millennium Development Goal 8 must be treated during the very short time remaining.

In conclusion I wish to underline Africa's enduring commitment to this indispensable global body — a universal organization whose viability is an existential necessity. It is in that spirit that Africa will continue to nurture its close cooperation with the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): I stand in the Hall today as the leader of one of the smallest countries in the world — small by size, population and resources. I also stand here today with a proud heart and a strong voice because my small country of Antigua and Barbuda has produced a giant in the world's geopolitical sphere. He is among the finest and most accomplished diplomats to have ever walked these great halls. The Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda send congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador John William Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are beyond sure that he will guide this body through a successful session. I offer congratulations also to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, on a job well done and for his unrelenting service to the international community.

Exactly five years ago today, I stood in this hallowed Hall and stated that:

> "We are all members of one body. The welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together. Industry cannot flourish if labour languishes. Transportation cannot prosper if manufacturing declines. The general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act, but it is well to remember that the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all." (*A/64/PV.7, p. 32*)

With the ever-increasing gaps in equality among nations, the challenges for developing countries over the years have remained vast. In trying to address the issue of inequality and to diminish very basic human challenges by 2015, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were described as a milestone in international cooperation. With a 15-year timespan for their implementation, the Declaration was widely expected to inspire development and to directly improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people. They are the people who are struggling to survive in the most basic living conditions and who are suffering from the effects of poverty, gender inequities, ill health and environmental degradation.

Thirteen years have gone by, and what do we, as a global community, have to show in terms of concrete results? No matter which side of the lens we look through, something is appallingly wrong. With less than two years to go before 2015, we must ask ourselves as leaders why those commitments, related to the most significant global declaration made to the world's most vulnerable people, are not being fulfilled.

It is important for me to be extremely clear. I am not here to declare the MDGs dead, nor am I advocating that they be interred. Rather, I remain convinced that they can still be refocused, reformed, reshaped and rebranded into a new mechanism post-2015.

We find ourselves standing at the precipice of 2015, that crucial defining moment. The current moment is captured by notable but uneven developments in some crucial areas. Considerable gaps remain and new challenges have emerged. As leaders we must therefore acknowledge that now more than ever, through the process of globalization, individuals and societies from one corner of the Earth to another, from oceans and continents, are intricately connected and more interdependent than ever before. Therefore, a post-2015 development agenda must concede that fact and be guided by that reality.

The deliberations for international collaboration and development ahead of 2015 present the opportunity to redirect previous notions of prosperity and development among nations. Considering the current world economic, social and environmental challenges, that is indisputably critical.

We must concede that the current structure of the internationally agreed development goals does not provide satisfactory remedies to our universal problems, which include an increase in global warming, the escalating gap between the worlds's rich and the poor, the further deterioration of the world's financial system and the uneven roles that developed and developing countries play in responding to and addressing issues of universal importance and impact on our societies. Taking into account some of those shortcomings, now is the opportune time for setting the stage for a post-2015 development agenda that is all-inclusive, effective and pragmatic.

Of concern to Antigua and Barbuda are the failings of the international community in fulfilling the aims and objectives outlined in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small

Island Developing States (SIDS). The year 2014 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados in 1994.

Looking back over the 20 years since that Conference, we see that the international community's actions to address the unique and special circumstances of SIDS have been lacking. It is my hope that the SIDS conference in Samoa in 2014 will give the international community the opportunity to correct the wrongs made and to improve on shortcomings with regard to SIDS. The conference will also present us with a third chance to identify a set of concrete actions, which will be needed for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and thereby regain momentum lost by SIDS in the quest for sustainable development.

We welcome the decision by the United Nations family to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States. Antigua and Barbuda pledges to highlight throughout 2014 the issue of SIDS with the aim of reinvigorating the SIDS agenda.

My Government firmly believes in promoting partnerships supporting sustainable development based on the principles of mutual respect and understanding, equality and a genuine desire to affect the social and economic development of all. My Government has deepened our integration efforts with our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) brothers and sisters, focusing on fully implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, as well as deepening the various subregional regulatory frameworks.

As a member of the smaller grouping of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Antigua and Barbuda has fully joined and endorsed the OECS economic union in an effort to build on the shared tradition of our subregional integration arrangements and to expand the areas of shared sovereignty in order to survive and ultimately thrive. At the same time, my Government has secured full participation in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and the Community of Latin American a Caribbean States, as we seek to further strengthen the integration and development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is a recognized fact, but one worth repeating, that small island States contribute the least to the causes of climate change yet suffer the most from its effects. We small island States have expressed our profound disappointment at the lack of tangible action within the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to protect SIDS and other vulnerable countries, their peoples, culture, land and ecosystems. The responsibility for mitigating climate change is shared by all nations, developed and developing. However, developed countries should shoulder their moral, ethical and historical responsibility for emitting anthropogenic greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is those actions that have now put the planet in jeopardy and compromised the well-being of present and future generations.

Vulnerable developing societies such as ours are also victims of the globalization of crime, notably in the havoc wrought by handguns in the possession of criminal elements, by narcotrafficking that is essentially targeted at markets in developed countries and by the deportation of criminals to our shores. We urge the international community, in recognition of the link between globalization and crime, to provide greater support for the efforts of small island States such as Antigua and Barbuda to address the escalation of crime and strengthen the rule of law in combating international drug trafficking. We further call on our developed partners to reduce the practice of deporting violent criminals to our shores. Most of those deportees have neither connection nor familiarity with our countries.

Antigua and Barbuda is proud to be among the growing number of States that have signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The Treaty will, among other things, assist Antigua and Barbuda in enhancing its capacity to tackle the scourge created by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which is associated with other transboundary crimes, such as drug trafficking. We have emphasized throughout the process that such crimes have had a negative impact on the socioeconomic well-being of our societies. Antigua and Barbuda stresses the importance of the early entry into force of the ATT and will continue to work energetically with Member States to ensure its entry into force.

Another threat to the sustainable development of small island developing States such as Antigua and Barbuda is the rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The situation is at an alarming stage, as hundreds succumb annually. For Antigua and Barbuda, the prevention, care and treatment of non-communicable diseases continue to be a challenge. Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the leading causes of death in our region. Our health-care system, economy and population are heavily burdened by NCDs; it is for that reason that my Government has become even more proactive in addressing the issue. Health care continues to be basically free for Antiguans and Barbudans, and the Government often helps citizens seek treatment abroad when our facilities at home are unable to provide it. I ask the Assembly to continue to keep the issue of NCDs high on its agenda.

My small developing nation of Antigua and Barbuda has sought to ensure that the trade rules agreed to by a majority of members of the international community, including the United States of America, are adhered to. I take this opportunity to once again draw the Assembly's attention to a trade dispute between my country and the United States of America that has been ongoing for a decade and which has been submitted to the dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organization (WTO). I draw the Assembly's attention to the dispute because I believe it has the potential to damage the credibility and undermine the utility of the WTO's dispute settlement system and of the WTO itself.

My Government won the case at both the original and appellate levels and yet, a decade later, the end is not in sight. It is a case that pits the world's largest economy against one of the smallest, and despite our best efforts, our patient negotiations with the United States of America have borne no fruit. The United States of America has neither removed the offending laws nor agreed on a fair settlement with Antigua and Barbuda that would compensate for the wanton destruction of an entire economic sector. We believe that it is a blow to the credibility of the WTO to allow the world's largest economy and the WTO's most powerful member to ignore the lawful decision of its dispute settlement tribunal without consequences. The international trading system will not long survive such a profound challenge, and we call on the United States to correct past wrongs and come to the table with meaningful proposals that can bring the matter to a just conclusion.

Although my Government has until now exercised strategic patience, we intend, through the only mechanism that the WTO has provided, to seek compensation for the thousands of jobs lost, the companies collapsed and the general devastation of the second-largest sector of our economy after tourism. More than jobs are at stake here. The WTO must be seen to deliver justice to its members, especially one of its smallest constituents. If not, its credibility as the arbiter of international trade disputes will bleed into the dust and hollow out its noble intentions.

As a part of the Caribbean and a member of the CARICOM family, Antigua and Barbuda supports the preservation of the sovereignty of every nation. We are therefore very proud of our long-standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. My Government condemns in the strongest possible terms any discriminatory or retaliatory policies and practices designed to prevent Cuba from exercising its right to freely participate in the affairs of our hemisphere. Today, I once again reiterate my Government's firm condemnation of the unilateral and extraterritorial application of coercive laws and measures contrary to international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of free navigation and international trade. Antigua and Barbuda therefore urges the United States of America to respect and take note of the unceasing call by the Members of the United Nations that it immediately lift the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on the Republic of Cuba. These and other associated measures serve no other end than to hinder the socioeconomic development and well-being of the people of the Republic of Cuba.

Antigua and Barbuda also affirms its long-standing stance and commitment towards combating terrorism in all its forms and expressions and condemns any action which goes against international law, resolutions of the United Nations or principles of human rights protection. We therefore condemn the recent terrorist acts in Kenya and express our profound sympathy to the Government of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the families of those who lost loved ones. We also in the strongest sense condemn acts of terrorism in other parts of the world.

Antigua and Barbuda also expresses its concern about the inclusion of the Republic of Cuba on the list of State sponsors of terrorism published by the State Department of the United States of America. We reject the unilateral elaboration of blacklists accusing States of allegedly supporting and sponsoring terrorism, which is inconsistent with international law. We request the United States of America to put an end to that unilateral practice.

Antigua and Barbuda welcomes the launch of the design for a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, an initiative that was championed by CARICOM. We also look forward to its full erection in the coming months.

One year ago, I stood here and reiterated the need for serious dialogue on the topic of reparations. Today I am proud that the members of CARICOM, at its thirty-fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, held in Trinidad and Tobago in July, agreed to support the establishment of a regional reparations commission to begin laying the groundwork for a process of engagement and conversation on the issue of reparations for native genocide and slavery.

I am equally pleased that the first regional reparations conference was held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines earlier this month, with proposals for the formalization of a regional reparations commission. Antigua and Barbuda therefore conceptualizes the call for reparations as an integral element of our development strategy and believes that the legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean has severely impaired our development options. We therefore assert that reparations must be directed towards repairing the damage inflicted by slavery and racism.

We have recently seen a number of leaders apologizing to the African diaspora, to indigenous peoples and to former colonies for past wrongs and injustices. I salute those leaders who have demonstrated such enlightenment and strongly encourage others to do so and equally match their words with concrete and material benefits to the descendants of genocide and the brutal enslavement of their ancestors.

My country, while developmentally focused, is mindful of other global issues, particularly with reference to peace and security. The continued unrest in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, is heartbreaking. The images of innocent women and children being displaced and killed tug at my consciousness. Antigua and Barbuda gives its unconditional support to the preservation of the role of the United Nations and other organizations in working towards stabilization and peace in Syria and other conflict-ridden countries.

In the same vein, we call on those leaders to protect civilians at all costs and move quickly to devise diplomatic solutions to the conflicts. Wilful and deliberate attacks upon civilians should be taken seriously by the international community, and the international courts should move to act in a manner consistent with international laws and norms.

War, or even the threat of war, should be an absolute last resort and should have the full support of the international community at all times. Unilateral prescriptions will never solve a problem.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders stand idle and see the tears and desperation on the faces of the many children who are hungry. We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders allow easily treatable illnesses and diseases to destroy our populations.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders sit back and allow the lines of class divisions and insurmountable social barriers to increase.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders continue to allow the imbalances of economic growth, destructive trade barriers and protectionism from developed to developing countries to persist.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders do not act to save our environment and stop the pollution of our air and oceans and the wanton destruction of our forests and lands only for the benefit of a few.

When the founders of the United Nations formulated this great institution, it was not envisioned as a stage or a repository for eloquent speeches. The United Nations was conceptualized as a place where our challenges would be discussed, solutions cultivated and action taken.

It is for those reasons that our leaders gathered here today should work towards a fundamental, impartial and sustainable social, economic and environmental post-2015 development agenda that is far-reaching and all-inclusive. Anything less would be unacceptable and would be a travesty for millions of the world's inhabitants, for whom we are required to act and do so courageously and decisively.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): At the outset, I wish to congratulate President Ashe on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and express my confidence that under his able and wise guidance, the Assembly will successfully accomplish its many tasks. I would also like to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of last year's President, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and extend my appreciation for the effectiveness with which he directed the work of the Assembly at the previous session.

Fiji reached a pivotal moment in its history earlier this month, when His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji promulgated the nation's new Constitution. This Constitution introduces the first genuine democracy that Fiji will enjoy since we gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1970. Forty-three years and three Constitutions later, we finally have a Constitution that is worthy of the Fijian people. It is a Constitution that meets the test of a genuine democracy, that upholds the legal and moral basis of a common and equal citizenry without denying anyone's individuality or culture.

The 2013 Fijian Constitution enshrines principles that are at the heart of all the world's great liberal democracies: an independent judiciary, a secular State and a wide range of civil, political and socioeconomic rights. It recognizes the indigenous peoples of Fiji and their customary practices, protects the rights of the predominantly indigenous landowners and those of their tenants, demands accountability and transparency from Government officials, builds strong and independent institutions and replaces our old weighted electoral system with one based on the principle of one person, one vote, one value. That historic achievement is the culmination of a path that Fiji embarked on in 2007 to establish a modern and stable society that can be a proud and responsible part of the global community.

For years we struggled to be a nation under a system that created different classes of citizens and in which the votes of some Fijians counted more than others. How could we be one nation when our fundamental law said that we were not one people? The very idea of a just and equal society, of an accountable Government and of loyalty to the nation State was being eroded from within. There were too many elites who thought the best way to entrench their own privileges was to sow the seeds of division and undermine our independent institutions. The removals of the Government in 1987 and 2000 were the most radical expressions of that dysfunction.

As a result, tens of thousands of Fijians suffered, and many made the decision to leave their home forever — to leave Fiji. As I have said before, that is one of the most shameful episodes of our history, and I am determined that it must never, ever happen again. We must never allow a fellow citizen to be second class or to be less than an equal of his neighbour. Surely, such a basic principle as that deserves the full support of all nations that would never accept any less for their own people.

So we have set out to make a change for the good, a permanent change that would set the nation on a straight course and allow Fiji to finally reach the potential it had when we so enthusiastically embraced our independence. It has been a long journey, and we have faced numerous challenges along the way. But it is with great pleasure and deep honour that I stand here today and say: our national compass has finally been reset. Under the new Constitution, we are heading towards Fiji's first genuinely democratic elections by September 2014 and a much brighter future as one nation.

With every month that passes, we are building the foundations of our new parliamentary democracy. Unlike in the past, we are building a credible and fair system that will guide that process. Four political parties have registered thus far under the new laws, which create transparency and accountability, and close to 540,000 Fijians — out of an estimated 620,000 eligible voters — have registered for the 2014 election.

Many modern, stable democracies have gone through their own turbulent periods. Some have gone through decades of instability and bloodshed, while others have had a single defining moment. Those events changed the course of history. They turned their countries from bastions of elitism and oppression into nations of freedom, equality and true democracy. The United States has its Bunker Hill and Civil War. France has the storming of the Bastille and the French revolution. Australia has the Eureka Stockade, and Britain has had a bloody history as it struggled to establish a constitutional monarchy. We Fijians have also had our share of turbulence.

Regrettably and to our great disappointment, some of our oldest friends had no faith in us. They abandoned us and sought to punish us with sanctions. We sought their assistance and understanding, but they turned their backs on us. They chose to support a form of democracy, governance and justice in Fiji that they would never have accepted for themselves. We hope that they see now that we were true to our word. All nations struggle over time to overcome their unique challenges, to correct historic sins and to be worthy of the principles on which they were founded. We in Fiji are no different. Our isolation led us to seek out new relationships, which have proven fruitful. Now, our standing in the world has never been stronger.

A key principle that has guided Fiji's political development and foreign policy and is soundly grounded in the Charter of the United Nations is that we determine our own destinies as sovereign States. At the same time, we recognize the necessity of collaborating with all Member States of the United Nations with the aim of supporting sustainable world peace, substantive justice, dignity and respect for all. It is that spirit of collaboration that has inspired us to go beyond parochial interests and reach out to help others. That spirit enjoins us to be loyal to common ideals, goals, values and principles. They remain our guiding beacons as we navigate our way in this millennium.

The theme set by the President to guide the general debate at this sixty-eighth session, which is "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage," is most fitting for the juncture at which the United Nations stands. In the midst of increasing poverty and underdevelopment and during an era of unprecedented wealth accumulation and technological advances, the rift that divides the rich and the poor zones of the world ever widens. We must therefore not lose focus on one imperative of our time: equality among nations, big and small, is central to the relevance, credibility and even survival of this global Organization.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the progress made thus far in the General Assembly towards expeditiously launching the follow-up mechanisms agreed at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. Throughout the course of this year, the Group of 77 and China has emphasized that the road map towards a post-2015 development agenda needs to address the implementation gaps of the Millennium Development Goals, with poverty eradication remaining an overarching goal. The new development agenda must be universal, applicable and relevant to all Member States. Let me also stress that the new development agenda should be centred on economic development that supports both social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Our common desire for a transformative global development agenda beyond 2015 can best be achieved through collective efforts and an enhanced global partnership. Such efforts must place the development and well-being of people at its core. If the international community and national Governments seriously commit to an agenda for meaningful transformation at the structural, institutional and normative levels, the post-2015 development agenda has the potential of achieving a paradigm shift in global conditions.

Fiji's commitment to being a good global citizen is manifested through our ongoing engagement with the United Nations and its associated agencies and secretariats. Our decision to take on the mantle of chairing the Group of 77 and China for the year 2013 was informed by the fact that Fiji embraces its rights as an equal Member of the United Nations and that we must therefore also carry all the due responsibilities expected of us within this great family of nations.

Fiji's commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unwavering. It is a source of great pride that, for a nation of our size, we are able to make a meaningful and significant contribution. For the past three decades, we have always responded to the call of the United Nations to serve, including in the most difficult circumstances around the world. While we fully recognize the risks involved, Fiji's confidence in its peacekeepers prompted us to provide troops to the Golan Heights this year to assist the United Nations in a time of need. The many years of service of Fijian troops in the Middle East region, particularly in Lebanon, Iraq and Sinai, are an asset that our troops take with them to that mission. Fiji also sees police peacekeeping and contributions in the corrections and justice sector as important in building local State institutions that can be run by local authorities once peacekeeping missions end, and we are building on our many existing commitments in that regard in Liberia, Darfur and South Sudan.

It is up to us in the General Assembly to ensure that all support possible is given to troop- and police-contributing countries serving on the ground, including through clear and appropriate policy guidance. For the good of the countries concerned, we must not abdicate that responsibility. I urge us all to work together in the United Nations to provide such concrete policy guidance, particularly as we see peacekeeping missions evolve into multidimensional and complex missions that differ greatly from early United Nations peacekeeping missions.

As a Pacific island nation, Fiji reaffirms its support for the efforts of small island developing States (SIDS) to achieve sustainable development. Not only are SIDS acutely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification and the increased frequency of extreme weather events, but for some of us the threat is to our very existence. Our response to the plight of those most at risk must therefore be characterized by a requisite sense of urgency.

The convening of the third International Conference for Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 will be critical to addressing, in a very specific and concrete manner, the many challenges faced by SIDS. It is an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to the implementation of the decisions and agreements pertaining to SIDS. As the international community discusses the post-2015 development landscape, including a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action, we must ensure that a new model accounts for and addresses the risks we face. This is particularly relevant for SIDS, where hundreds of millions of dollars in economic losses occur as a result of so-called natural disasters every year. Protecting development gains and investing in disaster resilience is vital to sustainable development.

The United Nations efforts to eradicate colonialism must forge ahead within the context of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, of which Fiji is a member. Through the Pacific regional body known as the Melanesian Spearhead Group, Fiji works together with other members of the Fourth Committee to accelerate the process of decolonization.

In reforming and developing its information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, Fiji has adopted a comprehensive approach by combining a national framework for ICT development with effective and pragmatic policies and initiatives to deliver results directly to the Fijian people. That approach is bearing fruit. Fiji has achieved 95 per cebt mobile coverage, including 3G; concluded one of the region's first open auctions for the 4G spectrum; and is implementing a number of innovative initiatives to increase affordable access and improve services, including in the most remote parts of our country.

The International Telecommunication Union, in its annual review of more than 150 countries' delivery of ICT infrastructure and services to their populations, gave special recognition to Fiji as a developing country. Fiji tied for the third largest improvement of any country and is ranked fourth globally in percentage terms, having improved by 14 per cent.

As the first country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Fiji has kept its oceanic obligations at the core of its foreign policy. While some disconnect exists between what is contained in international instruments and what is or is not implemented, we need a commitment to clear steps to turn words into actions in order to facilitate the sustainable management of ocean resources and make equitable the share of benefits from their utilization.

Fiji hosted the inaugural Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) last month. Its formation makes the PIDF the only South-South organization in the Pacific region that provides for a multi-stakeholder platform where Governments, the private sector and civil society can discuss what we Pacific Islanders need to do to achieve sustainable development.

We look forward to a productive sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Let me reiterate our full support and cooperation with President Ashe and all members with a view to advancing the objectives of the United Nations and the aspirations of the global community.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Military Forces, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Military Forces, was escorted from the rostrum.

Statement by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and inviting him to make a statement.

Mr. Van Rompuy (European Council): A year ago when we met in the General Assembly, we joined our voices to deplore the fact that the Syrian civil war had claimed over 25,000 lives. One year on, it has killed over 100,000 men, women and children. The number of refugees, which stood at 250,000 in September 2012, doubled by December that year, then doubled again by March, and then it doubled again. Today, there are 2 million Syrians outside their country, half of them children, and under current trends, their number is close to doubling again, and there may be 3.5 million refugees before the year is over. We cannot let this spiral of criminal, sectarian violence pursue its dreadful course at the heart of the world's most unstable region. What will the situation be when we meet again next year?

Any further paralysis of the international community over Syria is simply untenable. It was already true this summer, but worse was yet to come. Five weeks ago in the outskirts of Damascus, there was a new threshold of tragedy, a crime against humanity, and in response the stakes were raised. Today we are in a new situation.

The European Union welcomes the diplomatic opening created in order to control and destroy Syria's chemical weapons. It is important in itself. We absolutely must avoid a dreadful precedent being set on the use of chemical weapons — an abhorrent crime against humanity. The role of the United Nations in this respect is indispensable and has been underscored time and again by the 28 Governments of the European Union.

Following the Secretary-General's report and the inventory of its arsenal provided by the Syrian regime, it is urgent for the Security Council, together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to take the necessary decisions to ensure the swift and secure destruction of Syria's stocks of poison gas and nerve agents. A clear resolution of the Security Council would mark a turn, and I plea for its adoption.

Eliminating Syria's chemical arsenal is in itself a major step. Potentially, it could also be important for the wider dynamics in the region. Clearly, the conflict wrecking Syria reflects many of the deep-seated tensions rippling throughout the Middle East. It is fed by these tensions and fuels them as well. So a solution for Syria will need to take the wider picture into account. That is why any political opening matters deeply; a breakthrough on chemical weapons could start opening other doors. In the black wall of Syria's doom, it will be a first crack.

Paradoxically, there is more scope for quiet hope today than there was even a few weeks ago. Because if commitments can be upheld and promises kept on chemical weapons, if lines of communication can reopen, if we can find an agreement within the international community and at the Security Council — if we can do all this on chemical weapons, then chances are we can do it elsewhere.

There must be ways to open up opportunities. But when new opportunities arise, we must seize them. Only then will we see the outlook improve for Syria. Now is indeed the moment to work actively towards the "Geneva II" conference. The international community must fully engage with all available diplomatic means. The first priority is to bring all parties to the negotiating table. Those close to Damascus and those close to the Syrian opposition must do all within their power to draw each side to the table. The European Union is ready to provide all support needed to achieve a political settlement.

Elsewhere in the region too, new opportunities must and can be seized, not least in the Middle East peace process, where prospects for progress look better than they have for some time. All parties are returning to the negotiating table with renewed seriousness. For the European Union, the parameters are clear. Palestine and

Israel must be able to fulfil their legitimate aspirations as two States living side by side in peace and security. Now both parties must seize the moment.

We also hope that the expectations currently building around the new Iranian leadership will translate into concrete steps in the interest of regional stability and for the nuclear talks, where all efforts to find a negotiated solution, through the work of the E3+3 led by High Representative Catherine Ashton, have the European Union's full support. Both these developments — with Israel and Palestine and with Iran — can be mutually reinforcing with what is currently happening around Syria; there, all must be done to forge the path to a political solution.

Once the "Geneva II" conference starts, we have to be honest with ourselves. It will not be easy — ending a war never is. It will require political will and a real sense of compromise. But we must recognize that the cost of hesitating, of not engaging, would be much higher, and not only for the people of Syria. Every day counts. With every day of unforgivable violence, bitterness and trauma go deeper, radicalization and warlordism gain ground, hatred and despair win. Every day, reconciliation in Syria and around Syria becomes harder.

We in Europe know that reconciliation is the hardest thing. The countries of our continent agreed to live peacefully together only after many wars, and many civil wars, with huge numbers of victims — a price we never want others to have to pay. And we know reconciliation is even harder inside a country than between countries. No longer waging war is one thing; living again together is quite another.

Syria — as a country and a nation — is being destroyed beyond recognition. It will take time, courage and perseverance to build an inclusive, united, democratic Syria, where all Syrians can feel they belong and where all share a common future regardless of their identity and regardless of their religion. The promise of the Arab Spring must be met in Syria too, just as it must in Egypt and beyond. At heart, it is a shared yearning for democracy, for tolerance, for social justice — a powerful message in which we still believe.

But on this long path, the Syrians will need all the help they can get, just as others before, including we in Europe, received support when mending their nations. The United Nations can play an important role in helping the country to re-establish unity and in helping Syria eventually find justice and ensuring that there is no impunity and that individual perpetrators of war crimes are held accountable.

We Europeans are ready to play our part in helping Syria to rebuild its nation, just as we are engaged today on the ground in the humanitarian effort in Syria and in the countries to which refugees have flown, not least in Lebanon and Jordan, where the situation is extremely worrying. Our countries and institutions are working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to bring food, protection and shelter, as well as medical help and education. By far the biggest aid provider for Syria, jointly we have already provided €1.8 billion — some $2.4 billion — and we know that more will be needed.

(*spoke in French*)

We do so because Europe is ready to continue to play its role in the world. To many countries, whether in Africa, Latin America or Asia or from the Mediterranean to the Caspian, the European Union is a faithful partner in development, peace and security, for the Millennium Development Goals and world propserity through open trade. We are a strong partner in the fight against the extremism and barbarism of which the events in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq are recent and tragic manifestations.

Despite the financial crisis that is testing our economies, we do not disengage from our responsibilities in the world. Despite the crisis, we have maintained all European funding for development and humanitarian action in our common European budget, even as we reduce its size. Despite the crisis, we maintain our political and financial commitment against climate change in Europe and the world, and we will lend our full support to the international conference in Paris in 2015.

Indeed, despite the crisis, the European Union launched no fewer than five new European civilian or military missions over the past two years aimed at supporting reconstruction in Mali and South Sudan and re-establishing security in the Sahel and along Libya's borders and off the coast of Somalia. Moreover, in 2013 we renewed operational mandates in Afghanistan, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In crisis and conflict areas, the European presence on the ground is composed of doctors, paramedics, agronomists and engineers; it also includes magistrates and police and military personnel — men and women who assist their local counterparts in efforts to stabilize a country, re-establish order and the rule of law, restore the sense of justice and build confidence in the future.

(*spoke in English*)

Europe is not disengaging, despite the economic difficulties that the past few years have brought. The global financial crisis, which started in this very city five years ago, shook Europe and brought forth global imbalances that we have worked hard to address. We are putting our house in order and expect others to do so too. Internal imbalances need to be corrected and structural reforms pursued in countries all across the globe. For us, the results are starting to show. Today the eurozone is in better financial shape than 12 months ago. The existential threat to the euro area is over, and we are now focusing fully on improving prospects for employment and growth. We have launched far-reaching efforts, focused on the long term. It will take time before results show, in terms of strong economic growth and jobs, but once they start doing so, as they are now, they will be longer lasting. Next year, economic growth is projected for all but one of our 28 countries.

Our political will to preserve Europe's unity cannot be underestimated — we have shown it over the past five years — for, ultimately, it is a political project that unites us: to bring together countries; to bring together people.

(*spoke in French*)

In the month of September 2013, here in New York, the international community can and must make a comeback. It is our common responsibility, shared by all of us present here today, to translate the positive signs into concrete progress for peace and prosperity. I therefore call for negotiation, dialogue and the conclusion of international agreements based on the conviction — which is at the very foundation of this Organization — that international political progress happens through the free exchange of ideas among countries.

That holds true for Syria, with regard to both chemical weapons and the "Geneva II" conference. It holds true for the Middle East peace process and for the nuclear talks with Iran. But it also holds true for all the other great global challenges. It is from here in New York that a new momentum can and must emerge for the important upcoming global meetings on climate change, in Warsaw in November, on free trade in Bali in December, or on financial regulation at the Group of 20 in Brisbane next year. To exchange words that bring about action is itself an act of hope, and it is precisely hope that we need.

(*spoke in English*)

Hope is in our hands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

His Highness Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is with pleasure that I extend, on behalf of the Government and people of the State of Kuwait, our sincere congratulations to Mr. Ashe and to his country, Antigua and Barbuda, upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are certain that his vast experience in international affairs will enable him to conduct the deliberations of this session wisely and ably, and we wish him success in that endeavour. We extend our thanks to Mr. Vuk Jeremić for his great efforts as President at the previous session.

I should also like to pay tribute to the tremendous and tireless efforts by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in leading the Organization and disseminating its lofty message and in seeking to maintain international peace and security, in fulfilment of the aspirations of the States and peoples of the world for a better world that guarantees a life of dignity for all human beings.

The State of Kuwait condemns the acts of terrorism committed in a shopping centre in Nairobi on Saturday, 21 September. We extend our sincerest condolences to the people and Government of Kenya and to the families of the victims. We also underscore again our support for Bahrain and all of the measures being undertaken there to strengthen security.

The maintenance of regional and international peace and security occupies a position of great importance among the priorities of the foreign policy of the State of Kuwait, based on its principles and objectives, the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, which call for the building of bridges of confidence, good-neighbourly relations, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as for the promotion of the concepts of peaceful coexistence and the pursuit of peaceful settlements to conflicts and disputes.

In November 2012, the State of Kuwait celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of its Constitution, which was the result of a distinctive experience reflecting relations between ruler and subject. It evolved in a historically seamless manner into a democratic mechanism involving popular participation. That process has embodied the essence and values of political growth based on a commitment to working for peace, as well as developing and strengthening relations with neighbouring countries in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, common interests and rising above the wounds of the past in order to chart a better future for the region and the world.

In that context, I would highlight our bilateral relations with the Republic of Iraq and to commend the efforts of the Iraqi Government to fulfil its international commitments to the State of Kuwait, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Our bilateral relations have developed in positive and tangible ways through communications at the highest level between the leadership of both countries. We have overcome our past differences and are looking to the future to strengthen and develop future bilateral relations for the welfare and interests of the peoples of both countries.

We also look forward to genuine cooperation with the Republic of Iraq in order to find the remains of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and undertake a serious search for the national archives of the State of Kuwait, in implementation of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013). That resolution was adopted following the understanding reached to transfer follow-up responsibility for these matters from the High-level Coordinator on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and his concern to accelerate the closure of these two issues, discover the fate of the remaining missing persons and put an end to their families' suffering.

More than two and a half years have passed since the eruption of the crisis in Syria. This crisis is more than a humanitarian disaster; it is fast approaching the definition of a catastrophe, with the increasing numbers of victims and missing persons, both internally and externally, and the recurring scenes of bloodshed, violence, destruction, oppression and violation of the most basic principles and values of humankind. The scale of the crisis has become an obstacle to any possible solution that could contain it, despite the great and continued efforts at the regional and international levels. The Security Council has been faced with a historic and decisive responsibility: to start taking serious and tangible steps to ensure solutions that can guarantee an end to the bloodshed of the brotherly Syrian people, achieve their demands and restore security and stability in their country.

In January 2013, in response to the suffering of the Syrian people owing to the exacerbation of the crisis and its destructive consequences, the State of Kuwait hosted an international donors conference to support the humanitarian situation in Syria. This conference achieved the desired results, and pledges surpassed the targeted amount of $1.5 billion, of which the State of Kuwait contributed $300 million. This amount has been disbursed in full to a number of United Nations bodies and agencies, which converted it into emergency relief assistance to the Syrian people, inside and outside Syria. The State of Kuwait would like to thank all countries that participated in the donors conference. Their participation reflected their care and concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria.

We all recognize that the maintenance of peace and security is the key that opens the doors to a dignified life, prosperity and human creativity. This is because factors such as development, in all its economic, social, environmental, political and cultural aspects, cannot take place when peace and security are lacking or ebbing.

Turning to the Middle East region, Palestine is still facing chronic challenges that have disrupted the vision of a future based on development and regional and international cooperation. The political and security conditions in the region have also been disrupted by the lack of confidence created by Israel's continued policy of building illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian lands, its continued siege of the Gaza Strip and the detention of thousands of Palestinians and their imprisonment in subhuman conditions, in contravention of the most basic rules of international humanitarian law. Such practices reached their peak after Palestine received Observer State status in the Organization.

In this regard, we reiterate that only the international community will be able to find the difficult formula for peace. We value in this respect the ongoing efforts of the United States of America to achieve a breakthrough in the peace process and hope that persistent efforts and pressure on Israel will make it accept the resolutions of international legitimacy.

At the regional level, concerning Iran's nuclear programme, the State of Kuwait supports the ongoing efforts to peacefully resolve this issue in a manner a that will preserve the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the supervision and monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with international efforts and work on implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also call on Iran to cooperate with the IAEA and implement its resolutions to find a definitive solution to this crisis, which had cast it shadow on this region for many years, given rise to doubts and created an atmosphere of instability and tension.

This year, the State of Kuwait celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in this enduring Organization. Ever since then, and driven by its belief in the importance of common international action, it has sought to provide highly effective support to many of the agencies, bodies and entities of the United Nations system. This is particularly true in view of the growth and increase in challenges facing the Organization at all levels and putting the international community, represented by the United Nations, to the test, a test of international will and global partnership in facing these challenges.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represented a major shift in the ability of the United Nations to mobilize the global will to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, thus clearly expressing how ambitious the will of the international community really is and the feasibility of this global partnership.

However, major new challenges have emerged that are related either to security disruptions resulting from instability and the violations of human rights that accompany them, or to the steady environmental deterioration that threatens our world, together with other serious and urgent challenges. This requires the international community to take up the inevitable task of rethinking our preparations for a comprehensive and ambitious development plan.

We must complement the efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs by formulating new goals and incorporating them in the post-2015 development plan. This will enable us to take a quantum leap towards a renewed global partnership that will complete the process under way on the scientific bases of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the principles and outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) held in Brazil. It should help our peoples, to whom those goals represent the hope of creating an ideal world and a better life, particularly in the least developed countries or those still recovering from wars and conflicts. In this respect, we refer to the importance of the international community paying careful attention to supporting the foundations of development in order to achieve security and stability in Somalia and Afghanistan.

While the State of Kuwait is considered a developing country, it has been independent since 1961 and given a great deal of attention to providing financial and material assistance to the developing and least developed countries, through many different mechanisms and initiatives. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development is a central Kuwaiti institution firmly committed to implementing its promises and policies on international cooperation and assistance to needy people by on the ground. Since its establishment, and having outgrown its regional Arab scope, the Fund has expanded its activities and development assistance to Asian, African and Central and Latin American countries.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait has provided provisional funding of $500 million to the Republic of Yemen for development projects in the 2012-2014 provisional programme. The contribution seek to support a peaceful transition of power pursuant to the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, which are aimed at ending the crisis in Yemen, re-establishing security and stability there, and rehabilitating the development sectors in order to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people to live in peace and security through the consolidation of democracy and good governance.

The State of Kuwait, through its great interest in promoting and intensifying regional and international multilateral activities by reviewing cooperation and coordination measures in many important and political fields, has hosted many regional and international summits, meetings and conferences. All haved focused on a multiplicity of issues, challenges, hopes and aspirations and supported initiatives aimed at creating better conditions for the peoples of the region and the world.

In order to expand that approach, built on coordination and a spirit of entrepreneurship, in November the State of Kuwait will host the third Arab-African Summit under the theme "Partners in Development and Investment". We hope that this initiative will achieve results that deepen the foundations of Arab-African cooperation and open new horizons in the name of stability, development and cooperation between the people and countries of these two regions. The State of Kuwait will also host the thirty-fourth session of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in December, as well as the twenty-fifth Summit of League of Arab States in March 2014.

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment of the State of Kuwait to the international multilateral system and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its belief in the importance that all States fulfil the obligations to which they have committed in international agreements and conferences. That will help in the search for just and equitable solutions to the global threats and challenges confronting us in order to achieve the lofty objective of maintaining international peace and security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Enrico Letta, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have a great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Letta (Italy): With an end to the global crisis finally within reach, it is imperative to make growth and development our first priority today. In the past 10 years, remarkable progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been made. But we have to work harder. We need to empower individuals and communities and increase the capacity of economic and social systems to adapt to the rapid changes of our complex world.

With regard to the post-2015 development agenda, we should address the root causes of the ills afflicting our world rather than limit ourselves to the side effects. Sustainable development, in line with the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, is the best possible antidote. In that conviction, Italy co-facilitated the establishment of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with universal membership. We are also in favour of reinforcing the Economic and Social Council and of a partial reform of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The promotion of sustainable development goes hand in hand with the spread of democratic principles. We are in favour of the convergence of the sustainable development goals and the MDGs after 2015. But development cannot be simply reduced to economic growth and statistics. We must go beyond gross domestic product and pay adequate attention to the more comprehensive notion of "quality of life".

Special attention should be paid to the role of women's rights and gender equality. Although women cultivate more than half the food grown in the world, they represent two thirds of the people who live in poverty and suffer from hunger. More female participation in the global economy means more equality and growth.

As the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/68/1) notes, in the past 13 years gains have been made in the fight against poverty, but despite these tangible improvements one in eight persons worldwide still suffers from malnutrition. Food security should be a priority area of action. It combines the need to act locally and globally. It incorporates some of today's most crucial issues: a sustainable relationship between consumption and production, energy efficiency, and more.

Italy is making a specific contribution to the issue of food security through Expo 2015 in Milan. The theme is "Feeding the planet: energy for life". More than 130 countries have so far agreed to participate. Italy will use Expo Milan as an opportunity to exchange best practices on global sustainability in the area of food security and nutrition. We intend to promote new partnerships between the private and public sectors. As I underlined to the heads of the United Nations agencies based in Rome at a recent meeting, Italy feels that the time has come to launch a new global initiative on food. The United Nations participation in Expo 2015 is consequently of great importance. An integrated approach to development also involves a focus on its social dimensions.

The projected rise of the world population highlights one of the most serious problems today. I am referring to global unemployment, particularly among young people. This phenomenon affects every part of the world, including Europe and my country. We want to combine the measures taken at the national and European levels to launch our war against unemployment.

Italy deems it important to focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a true driver for employment. Such enterprises are well placed to create jobs for young people and contribute to social stability. In Europe, 85 per cent of new jobs in the private sector are created by SMEs. In the employment sector, great attention must also be given to people with disabilities.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world become immigrants in a phenomenon that affects both developed nations and countries of origin. Italy's geographic location makes it a port of entry for thousands of immigrants. At the national level, we respect the fundamental human rights of immigrants and prosecute criminals who engage in human trafficking. At the same time, we have fostered international cooperation with the countries of origin and of transit.

On this crucial subject, I wish to quote Pope Francis, who decided to visit the small island of Lampedusa this summer. He brought a message of support for the thousands of immigrants who arrive there from Africa every year. We should all fight what he called the "globalization of indifference" and feel the suffering of migrants as our own.

Recognizing that more needs to be done at the national and international levels, we look forward to the second summit of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held in New York this October.

Achieving sustainable development requires stability, security and peace. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the Italian Government has underlined the importance of preserving the role of the United Nations as the ultimate guardian of peace. At the same time, we strongly condemn what has taken place in Syria with regard to chemical weapons. We cannot be indifferent to blatant violations of fundamental international rights.

Italy invites all members of the Security Council and other relevant international stakeholders to spare no effort in the search for political solutions. That is why the Italian Government welcomed the Geneva framework for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons. We strongly support the work undertaken in the Security Council aimed at inducing Syria to participate in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We cannot accept the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and in neighbouring countries. Once again, we invite all the parties involved in the conflict to fully respect international humanitarian law. There must be effective protection for humanitarian assistance.

Italy has intensified humanitarian assistance, particularly for refugees. Italy confirms its pledge of $30 million for 2013 and intends to provide even more support to expand the reach of humanitarian assistance. At the Group of 20 Summit held in Saint Petersburg, we announced our intention to implement new humanitarian and emergency initiatives, for an additional $50 million. On Friday, upon my return to Rome, I will enact that measure.

We will continue to keep Somalia high on our agenda. As I confirmed to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud a few days ago in Rome, Italy is willing to help the Somali authorities in their efforts to lay the foundations of an effective and united federal State. Together with Ethiopia, Italy has convened a ministerial meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Partners Forum tomorrow, 26 September, here in New York, to discuss Somalia.

As the top contributor to Libya, Italy is supporting the country in its stabilization and democratic transition, and we remain fully committed to cooperation with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Before the end of the year, Italy will host the second international conference on Libya in Rome, which we are preparing together with the Libyan authorities, UNSMIL and other partners.

Italy reiterates its strong commitment to the stabilization of Mali and the Sahel region. At the national level, we are currently funding training for border police in Mali and the Niger. We welcome the holding of the next high-level meeting on the Sahel. The strategy presented by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Romano Prodi, is a good example of increasing efforts and resources.

Italy is the seventh-largest contributor to the general budget of the United Nations. Since 2006, despite financial constraints, we have been the top contributor of United Nations peacekeepers among Western countries. We are demonstrating our commitment to peace and stability through our participation in 10 different United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide, from the Mediterranean and the Middle East to Africa and Afghanistan.

Italy is engaged in international initiatives related to peace and security, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, which we have already ratified. Other relevant initiatives include the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Italy believes that respect for human rights is fundamental to peaceful coexistence among nations. Our foreign policy will continue to focus on social and humanitarian affairs and the protection of human rights. Wherever human rights are at risk, global peace and security are also at risk.

Italy will continue its efforts to better defend those most vulnerable to violence and discrimination. Our actions and our thoughts must focus on the categories most at risk: women, children, religious and ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers.

The recent atrocities in Pakistan once again illustrate the importance of the issue of religious tolerance. The General Assembly should never stop acting to counter religious hatred and fundamentalism.

At the same time, Italy will continue to support the campaign for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

In the second half of 2014, Italy will assume the presidency of the European Union (EU). We want the EU to be more open to the world. That means more European foreign, or rather global, policy. It also means more trade exchanges with the rest of the world. In that connection, we will host the next summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting, in Milan in October 2014.

I am convinced that a well-governed Europe can act as a global player. A good example is the EU enlargement policy, which succeeded in bringing stability to the Balkans in a very short time. It is high time for the EU to rise again to assume a leading role on the world stage. We in Europe must act now for more unity and for more effective governance.

On the theme of adapting to a changing world, allow me to conclude by referring to reform of the Security Council. As a leading member of the Uniting for Consensus group, Italy strongly believes that Security Council reform is absolutely necessary. The adoption of any such reform, however, will require the consensus of a large majority of the membership. We need to update the Security Council to today's world, increasing its accountability, transparency and effectiveness. To bridge the gap between the different models of reform, all Member States should be ready to engage in the next round of negotiations with a higher degree of flexibility and openness to compromise.

We have many challenges ahead. Italy will contribute to addressing those challenges as an active member of the international community within a framework of reinforced global governance. We make that commitment before the General Assembly, and we make that commitment before the international community.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.